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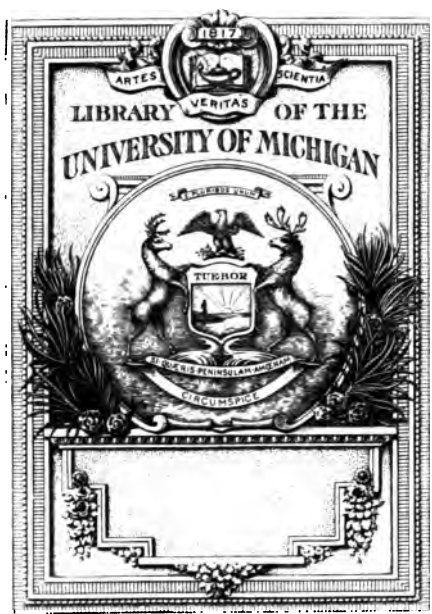
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MY FRIENDS
AND ACQUAINTANCE:

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MEMORIALS, MIND-PORTRAITS,

AND

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

Deceased Celebrities

OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY:

WITH

SELECTIONS FROM THEIR UNPUBLISHED LETTERS.

By P. G. PATMORE,

AUTHOR OF

"CHATSWORTH; OR, THE ROMANCE OF A WEEK;" "MARRIAGE IN MAY FAIR,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

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WILLIAM HAZLITT.

IX.

HIS METHOD OF COMPOSITION.—HIS DISLIKE OF WRITING.—HIS POWER OF ABSTRACTION.—HAZLITT AT WINTERSLOW HUT.

HAZLITT almost always wrote with the breakfast things on the table ; for, as I have said before, they usually remained there till he went out at four or five o'clock to dinner. He wrote rapidly, in a large hand, as clear as print, made very few corrections, and almost invariably wrote on an entire quire of foolscap ; contriving to put into a page of his manuscript exactly the amount (upon an average) of an octavo page of print ; so that he always knew exactly what progress he had made, at any given time, towards the desired goal to which he was travelling—namely, the end of his task.

Unless what he was employed on was a review, he never had a book or paper of any kind about him while he wrote. In this respect, I imagine he stood alone among professional authors.

With respect to Hazlitt's actual method of composition, he never, I believe, thought for half an hour beforehand, as to what he should say on any given subject ; or even as to the general manner in which he should treat it ; but merely, whether it was a subject on which he *had* thought intently at any previous period of his life, and whether it was susceptible of a development that was consistent with the immediate object he might have in view, in sitting down to write on it. Having determined on these points, and chiefly on the latter, his pen was not merely the mechanical, but (so to speak) the intellectual instrument by which he called up and worked out his thoughts, opinions, and sentiments, and even the style and language in which he clothed them ; it was the magician's wand with which he compelled and marshalled to his service the powers of his extraordinary mind, and the stores of

illustrative materials which his early life had been spent in accumulating and laying by for use or pleasure. He never considered for more than a few moments beforehand the plan or conduct of any composition that he had undertaken, or determined to write—whether it was a mere magazine paper, or a considerable work; he merely thought for a brief space more or less, till he had hit upon an opening sentence that pleased or satisfied him; and when that was achieved, he looked upon the thing as done: for everything else seemed to follow as a natural consequence. In short, his pen had become, during the last ten or twelve years of his life, a sort of inspiration to him; and he was as sure of its answering to his claims upon it, whenever he chose to make them, as if he had got all the materials on which it was to work ready arranged, labelled, and catalogued for use, in “the book and volume of his brain.”

This certainty and facility were, in some degree, the result of habit and practice, no doubt; and they are, to a certain extent, enjoyed by most writers who are much accustomed to composition. But the total want

of premeditation with which Hazlitt could produce, in a singularly short space of time, an essay full of acute or profound thought, copious, various and novel illustrations, and perfectly original views, couched in terse, polished, vigorous, and epigrammatic language, was quite extraordinary, and is only to be explained by the two facts, first, that he never by choice wrote on any topic or question in which he did not, for some reason or other, feel a deep personal interest; and secondly, because on all questions on which he did so feel, he had thought, meditated, and pondered in the silence and solitude of his own heart, for years and years before he ever contemplated doing more than thinking of them.

When Hazlitt was regularly engaged on any work or article, he wrote at the rate of from ten to fifteen octavo pages at a sitting; and never, or very rarely, renewed the sitting on the same day, except when he was at Winterslow—where, having no means of occupation or amusement in the evening part of the day, he used, I believe habitually, to write after his tea. And, doubtless, one of

his motives for going there when he had any considerable work to get through, was the knowledge that by that means alone he could persuade himself to "work double tides."

This brings me to observe that Hazlitt hated writing, and would never have penned a line, and indeed never did, till his necessities compelled him to do so. To think was, and ever had been, the business and the pleasure of his intellectual life—though latterly it had become, on many topics, a fatality and a curse. But to promulgate his thoughts to perverse, or incapable, or unattending ears—to—

"Wear his heart upon his sleeve,
For daws to peck at"—

seemed to him at best but a work of supererogation—the result of a silly vanity, or a shallow and empty egotism. But to do this as he did, for "certain sums of money"—to "coin his brain for drachmas," and even to feel himself tempted, as he often did, to put off false and base coin instead of the true and good, because the latter would not pass current—daily to hawk about for sale "the immortal part of him," merely to supply the

sordid wants of the mortal part—this was one of the troubles that (unconsciously to himself, I believe) perpetually preyed upon his mind, and helped to make him the unhappy man he was.

Hazlitt's judgment and tact as to what would suit the public taste was such, that what he wrote was sure of certain sale, in various quarters, and at a liberal price. So that the labour of a couple of mornings in the week, upon the average, would have amply supplied all his wants, had he chosen to employ himself regularly with that view. Yet nothing could ever persuade him to set to work till his last sovereign was gone, and his credit exhausted with his landlady and his tavern-keeper; and I have repeatedly known him to leave himself without a half-crown to buy him a dinner, or, what was still more a necessary of life to him, a quarter of a pound of tea; and this at a moment, perhaps, when he had just committed some escapade, in the way of revenge for some supposed injury or slight, which had left him without a friend to whom he could persuade himself to apply for the loan of one.

And what made this habit of procrastina-

tion the more remarkable was, that he had an almost childish horror of owing money, and was always ready to pay it away, even to the last guinea, the moment he received the proceeds of any considerable work. I do not mean that he had any particularly strict notions as to the relations of debtor and creditor; but his dread of the personal consequences to which a debt to a stranger made him liable, amounted to a pitch of haunting terror and alarm, under which he could not live. Let me add, also, that he had a grateful and honourable sense of any unusual forbearance exercised towards him in this particular, which made it a pleasure to him to pay the claim in question the moment he had the means of doing so. He was also scrupulous in remembering and returning any trifling sums that he might have been induced to borrow of a friend, under any momentary pressure of the kind alluded to above—always provided the kindness was done in a manner that was agreeable to his notions of the true art of conferring obligations.*

* See his masterly essay on "The Spirit of Obligations."

With the exception of his early metaphysical work, and his "Life of Napoleon," all Hazlitt's productions were written with a double view—that of their appearance in a periodical work in the first instance, in parts or numbers, and their subsequent collection into volumes. So that he got a double remuneration for nearly all of them. The whole of the "Spirit of the Age," and the greater part of the "Table Talk" and the "Plain Speaker," were written for and appeared anonymously in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Consequently the articles were written at long intervals from each other, and without any one in the work having a necessary reference to any of the others. They were also all written under the pressure of the moment, and scarcely at all altered when they appeared in a collected form. This will account for the numerous marks of haste, oversight, and even radical error, which a critical examination of all Hazlitt's productions may detect, and which his own infallible tact would have discovered to a larger extent than that of any one else, had he been able to read them over with attention. But this

he was totally incapable of doing; and it was a remarkable peculiarity of his mental habits and temperament. He never took the smallest pleasure in reading over, in print, anything that he had written; on the contrary, he felt it to be a task and a trouble to do so, and never did it but "on compulsion;" taking all the consequences (and they were by no means trifling ones to him) of escaping from the task.

It must not be supposed from this fact that Hazlitt was indifferent about his literary reputation in the high and permanent sense of that phrase. He had that anxious and restless yearning for it which is perhaps indispensable to the very existence of such a reputation. And this was one of the chief causes of his bitter anger and resentment at the innumerable attacks that were made on his pretensions as a writer, knowing, as he did, the extensive effect which these must necessarily produce on the progress of any reputation, much more of one which was subject to so many disadvantages and drawbacks, even from within its own springs and sources.

But Hazlitt's intellectual temperament had been so miserably shaken and shattered by the events of his past life, that it was physically impossible for him so to gird up his mind to the duties it owed to itself, as to enable it to take that deep and sustained interest in its own operations and movements, in the absence of which no actual and substantive literary reputation of the highest grade can ever be achieved. Hazlitt (like Coleridge) was looked upon during his life, and will, perhaps, hereafter be looked upon, much more with reference to what he might have done under happier or more favourable circumstances, than to what he actually accomplished. It will be felt, no less by posterity than it was by his contemporaries, that the writer of the "Essay on the Principles of Human Action," *might have been* among the greatest metaphysicians of any age or country; that the author of the "Table Talk" and the "Plain Speaker" *might have given* to the world a body of moral truth and wisdom that has at present no substantive existence; that the critic of Shakspeare and the Elizabethan writers *might have supplied,*

more effectually than any other writer we have yet had among us, that digested and enlightened estimate of our own literature which we have hitherto been left wholly without; that the critic of the "British Picture Galleries" *might* have set forth the true principles of Art, in a manner and to an effect that has never yet been accomplished, and in the absence of which we can scarcely hope to see Art rise above that elegant mediocrity at which it stands throughout Europe in the present day.

I will only add on this subject, that Hazlitt's method of composition, even on subjects which he was accustomed to treat the most profoundly—moral or metaphysical questions—was rapid, clear, and decisive; so much so in the latter respect, that his MS. was like a fair copy, and he scarcely thought it necessary even to read it over before sending it to the press.

What is still more remarkable is, that his power of composition was but little affected by the general state of mind he might be in at the time of sitting down to his work. If he could but persuade himself to *begin* writ-

ing on any subject which he had himself chosen for discussion, he could so abstract his thoughts from all topics but *that*, as to be able to escape for the time from even the most painful and pressing of external circumstances.

As a proof of this, I may give a passage from one of his letters, written to me when he was in Scotland, whither he had gone on a matter which affected and troubled him almost to a pitch of insanity, and never relaxed its hold and influence upon his thoughts and feelings for a single moment, except when he was engaged in writing for the press. Before his departure from town, he had arranged with Mr. Colburn for a volume of "Table Talk," which was to consist of four hundred octavo pages, and of which not a line was written when he left London. From the day he quitted home his mind had been in a state of excitement bordering (as I have said) on disease, in consequence of circumstances that I may probably refer to more particularly hereafter. Yet four or five weeks after his departure he writes me as follows, at the end of a long letter, the pre-

vious part of which offers the most melancholy evidence of what the state of his mind must have been during the whole period of his absence:—

“ You may tell Colburn when you see him that his work is done magnificently; to wit—
 —I. On the knowledge of character, 40 pp.
 II. Advice to a schoolboy, 60 pp. III. On patronage and puffing, 50 pp. IV. and V. On Spurzheim’s theory, 80 pp. VI. On the disadvantages of intellectual superiority, 25 pp. VII. On the fear of death, 25 pp. VIII. Burleigh House, 25 pp. IX. Why actors should not sit in the boxes, 35 pp.—In all 340 pages. To do by Saturday night: X. On dreams, 25 pp. On individuality, 25 pp.—390 pages.” He says, in a postscript, “ I have been here a month yesterday.”*

During this same period, too, he had written a considerable part of another work, which was afterwards published under the title of the “Liber Amoris,” of which he

* As this letter fixes the date and place of the above-named essays, several of which are among the finest of his compositions, it may be interesting to add that it is dated from “Renton Inn. Renfrewshire,” and it bears the post-~~r~~

speaks as follows in the above-named letter: "On the road down I began a little book of our conversations, i.e. mine and the statue's. It is called 'The Modern Pygmalion.' You shall see it when I come back."

The three or four hours a day employed by Hazlitt in composition enabled him to produce an essay for a magazine, one of his most profound and masterly Table Talks, in two or three sittings; or a long and brilliant article of thirty or forty pages for the Edinburgh Review, in about a week. But when he had an entire volume or work in hand he invariably went into the country to execute it, and almost always to the same spot—a little wayside public-house, called *The Hut*, standing alone, and some miles distant from any other house, on Winterslow Heath, a barren tract of country on the road to and a few miles from Salisbury. There, ensconced in a little wainscoted parlour, looking out over the bare heath to the distant groves of Norman Court, some of his finest essays were written; there, in utter solitude and silence, many of his least unhappy days were spent; there, wandering for hours over

the bare heath, or through the dark woods of the above-named domain, his shattered frame always gained temporary strength and renovation.

I have sometimes regretted that I did not go down to this place when he was there, and spend a week with him, as he two or three times pressed me to do. But I have as often pleased myself by thinking that he was much better alone at those times; for he was then comparatively happy, being absent from all the scenes and circumstances which were at least the proximate causes of his misery, and surrounded by every personal comfort and respect that a profuse expenditure could command from people wholly unaccustomed to such guests, and to whom his advent must have seemed like a godsend: for "The Hut," though it was kept by reputable people, and afforded every needful comfort, was (as I have said) a mere way-side public-house, situated on a barren heath, and was frequented only by a few pedestrian travellers, and by the guards and coachmen of the public conveyances going that road—the high road from London to Salisbury.

The admirable things which Hazlitt wrote at this place, and the tone of mind in which some of them have evidently been composed—particularly the essay “On Living to Oneself” *—might justify one in hoping that here at least he tasted of that intellectual peace and contentment which, of all men living, he was the best able to appreciate, and (as it should therefore seem) to enjoy. But I doubt if such was really the case, and

* The following are the opening passages of this essay:—

“I never was in a better place or humour than I am at present for writing on this subject. I have a partridge getting ready for my supper; my fire is blazing on the hearth; the air is mild for the season of the year; I have had but a slight fit of indigestion to-day —(the only thing that makes me abhor myself); I have three good hours before me; and, therefore, I will attempt it.” * * “As I look from the window at the wide bare heath before me, and, through the misty moonlit air, see the woods that wave over the top of Winterslow,

“‘While Heav’n’s chancel vault is blind with sleet,’

my mind takes a flight through too long a series of years, supported only by the patience of thought, and secret yearnings after truth and good, for me to be at a loss to understand the feeling I intend to write about.”

It appears by a foot note that this delightful essay was “written at Winterslow Hut, January 18th, 19th, 1821.”

whether the utmost and the best that Hazlitt could do, even here, either for himself or for others, was to imagine and describe and yearn after such a state of being. To feel and enjoy it was not within his capacity. Even had every conceivable external appliance and means for such enjoyment been at hand, the (so to speak) *physical* taste for it was wanting; the *palate* was dead, and the most exquisite flavours and most exciting viands conveyed no pleasure to the defeated and interdicted sense. Not that his sense of intellectual enjoyment had been jaded and palled by over-indulgence, or disordered by ill-applied stimulants. On the contrary, nothing could be more pure, simple, and natural than Hazlitt's intellectual tastes and desires, so far as they preserved their existence at all. But they seemed, as it were, benumbed and paralysed into a condition of torpidity and suspended animation, that nothing could awaken into life but those violent agents which, like that of the galvanic power applied to the dead limb, animate only to convulse and distort.

The truth is, that although Hazlitt was by

nature better fitted for solitude than most men, he could not, under the actual condition and circumstances of his mind and temper, have existed for any length of time out of London, or some other great metropolis, where the world of life and action, of hope and enjoyment, that he saw about him, might be turned into passive instruments of hope and action and enjoyment to himself, in that secondary and intermediary sense in which alone he could use such instruments, or any others, to such a purpose.

I should be doing injustice to Hazlitt's reputation if I were to quit this part of my subject without noticing a fact of which many of his literary friends must have been aware, and which, whatever may be thought of it as regards his writings themselves, and the motives and inducements of their author in producing them, should remove or nullify much of the adverse criticism that has been put forth respecting them. The truth is, that among the few faults which have been justly found with Hazlitt's style, and the mode in which he has treated his subjects, nearly every one of them was introduced

advisedly, and with the perfect knowledge of the writer that they were justly liable to the remarks made on them. His plea was, that those faults were indispensable to the reception and success of what he wrote—to that immediate popularity, without the attainment of which he could not have written at all, because he could not have got paid for what he wrote.

Whether he was right or wrong in this theory is another question. But it was one on which he uniformly acted—at least after he had adopted literature as a profession: for the work to which he himself chiefly looked and referred with pride and pleasure—the “*Essay on the Principles of Human Action*”—though his earliest work, is almost wholly free from the faults imputed to his after productions. But the consequence, as he has a hundred times declared, is, that it has not been read by anybody, and is to this day almost entirely unknown.

X.

HAZLITT'S CONVERSATIONAL AND SOCIAL POWERS.—
EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY.—VISIT TO JOHN HUNT
IN PRISON.—ANECDOTES OF JEFFREY.—MRS. SIDDONS
AND MISS O'NEIL.—WALTER SCOTT.—THE MARQUIS
AND THE MANAGER.

As I have spoken of Hazlitt's conversational powers and social qualities, I will here illustrate them by a few passages from my diary.

EXTRACTS FROM DIARY.

May 21, 1822.—On Sunday, while we (Hazlitt and myself) were with John Hunt,* he (Hazlitt) related two or three nice things about Jeffrey. One was a reply of his to Owen (of New Lanark), who had been relating to him something of a person who, on visiting his (Owen's) place, seemed disposed chiefly to notice those of his people who were good-looking; on which Owen said, "Now,

* Then confined in Coldbath Fields Prison for a political offence.

my plan is exactly the reverse of this. I notice in particular those to whom nature has not been so bountiful as she has been to the rest." "Ah," said Jeffrey, "nature smiles on one, and Owen on the other."

On another occasion, when Owen was teasing Jeffrey about his system, Jeffrey said, "But Mr. Owen, according to all this that you are telling me, *you*, who are the founder and inventor of this system, on the supposition of its being capable of working these effects, ought to be the best man in the world. Now, to tell you the truth, I don't see that you are any better than many other people that I know. And what," added Jeffrey, "do you think he had the impudence to reply to this? Why, he bade me name the persons to whom I alluded; and when I did so he took exceptions to them, as persons *not* so good as himself."

Speaking of Mrs. Siddons and Miss O'Neil, Hazlitt said it was idle to compare them together; for, however excellent Miss O'Neil might be, Mrs. Siddons was *above all excellence*. He added that he had said this to a party of Scotchmen at Edinburgh, and that

they did not understand what he meant; they did not seem to see that there was anything in what he had said characteristic either of Mrs. Siddons or of himself; and he related the story as being perfectly characteristic of *them*—that however acute they (the Scotch) may be to a certain point, beyond that they cannot feel or appreciate anything.

Speaking of Walter Scott, he said that when he was in Edinburgh, Jeffrey had offered to introduce him (Hazlitt) to Scott, but that he declined. He said to Jeffrey, "I should be willing to kneel to him, but I could not take him by the hand." Alluding to Scott's political opinions and his supposed connexion with the *Beacon* and *Blackwood's Magazine*.

He afterwards said of Walter Scott, "He seems to me to hang over Scottish literature just as Arthur's Seat hangs over Edinburgh, like a great hulking lion."*

Dined at ——'s with Hazlitt. He told

* I think he afterwards used this comparison in print.

some capital things of A——. When A—— was manager of the Italian Opera, the king (George IV.) went one night, accompanied by Lord Hertford, and A—— and Taylor lighted them, as usual, to the royal box. On ascending the stairs Lord Hertford (who was growing very infirm at this time) slipped and hurt himself, and had nearly fallen down, but evidently wished it not to be noticed, and jumped up again, and pretended that nothing had happened. When they reached the royal box, A——, instead of taking this cue, which the marquis had given to all in attendance, addressed him, and “hoped his lordship had not injured himself by the little accident on the stairs?” The marquis, evidently hurt at this notice, replied, “Accident—accident? what accident? What do you mean?”

It was A—— himself who related this story of his own blundering impertinence, but related it purely as an instance of court manners—of the want of gratitude in the marquis for the kind interest that he (A——) had taken in his infirmities. “As if,” said Hazlitt, “it were the place of the manager

of a theatre to see any deficiencies in a marquis!"

He told another story of A—— having taken some people to see Harlow's copy of the Transfiguration (which Hazlitt described as very bad), and showing it to them as a prodigiously fine thing; but on one of the party (who told the story to Hazlitt) saying that he thought one of the heads, pointing to it, a very bad one, he (A——) replied, "Oh, I don't mean to say that the heads are good. I'm not praising the Transfiguration. I don't think anything of *that*; it is the *copy* that I speak of as inimitable. Its faults are the faults of the original."

He related another story of the same person (whom he described as a singular embodiment of self-sufficient impertinence). On entering a room at a friend's house, where two or three persons were collected round a picture, seemingly intent on admiring it; A—— walked towards the picture, but before he had got half way to it, stopped and looked: "Ay," said he, "I see—a copy, evidently. I can see that from the cracks in

the varnish." "Thus," said Hazlitt, "throwing out his impertinence before him, as a herald of his approach, and, as is not uncommon with him, pitching upon as a mark of the picture's youth precisely that which, if it indicated anything, indicated its age."

Speaking of having just called on Andrews about a volume of *Maxims* that he was writing, he said Andrews had spoken of his (Hazlitt's) article about the Fight (between Neate and the Gas Man) in the *New Monthly*, and seemed to think it was unrivalled in its way. P—— said, jokingly, "You mustn't reckon too much on his opinion; for it may have a rival before long:" alluding jestingly to one that he (P.) was writing on the same subject. "Why," he said, "I am not going to write another!"

He had just dined with Haydon, and related one or two things told by him (Haydon) that passed at a dinner at C——'s, where Y——, the tragedian, was present. Speaking of a recent performance of his, which, by his own account, he had got through very indifferently, he said quite seriously, "But, in fact, I have a kind of feverette upon me

now." He (Y——) afterwards told what he considered as a very interesting story, of his having actually been addressed *by name by a perfect stranger*, while travelling in the Highlands of Scotland—a fact which he seemed to regard as the summit of human celebrity.*

Speaking of the American character, Hazlitt related a story told him by ——, illustrating their coolness under uncommon circumstances. He was spending an evening with an American family, when a young man was shown into the room. On his entering, the master of the house got up and went to him, saying, "Ah, George, how do you do?" The young man replied that he was very well, and then took his seat among

* Hazlitt afterwards related these two stories of Y—— to Northcote, and has reported (in the *Boswell Redivivus*) N.'s characteristic commentary on the latter of them. "Good God!" exclaimed N., "did he consider this as a matter of wonder, that, after showing himself as a sign for a number of years, people should know his face? If an artist or an author were recognised in that manner, it might be a proof of celebrity; but as to an actor, a fellow who had stood in the pillory might as well be proud of being pointed at."

the rest of the persons present. After a little while something was said showing that the young man who had just joined the party was related to the family, and had lately been absent from home. This led to inquiries from the English visitor, and it turned out that the youth was the son of the host, and had just arrived from China, and that this was the first meeting after a separation of ten years!

XI.

A NIGHT AT THE SOUTHAMPTON.—DAWE, THE PAINTER.
—ANECDOTES OF HIM.—DRAMATIC SCENE AT HIS
HOUSE.—THE TWO DROMIOS.—SCENE AT MRS.
M——'S.—ANECDOTE OF HAYDON.—SKETCH OF
HAYDON'S CHARACTER BY HAZLITT.

EXTRACTS FROM DIARY CONTINUED.

January 15, 1825.—To-night (at the Southampton), Hazlitt told some capital things about Dawe the painter.* Describing his essential and ingrained meanness of character, he said, "He had a soul like the sole of a shoe;" and he related some things illustrative of this character. He said Dawe used to lend out every farthing of his own money at usurious interest, and then borrow money of his friends at no interest at all to get on with; and that once he quite abused, and almost quarrelled with John Lamb, who used to lend him money, because on one occa-

* Who was at this time at St. Petersburg, whence he afterwards returned with a fortune of near half a million of money.

sion, Lamb asked him for an acknowledgment for it in case of death. Lamb wanted a stamped receipt, which would have cost a few pence, and Dawe thought this an enormity.

He described a capital scene that had taken place at Dawe's. There was a man named K——, who was reckoned to be like Dawe in personal appearance (both of them being remarkably ugly), and this K—— had often asked Hazlitt to introduce him to Dawe,—he (K.) having a great wish to see a likeness of himself. Dawe, too, had often heard of this resemblance. At last Hazlitt took K—— to Dawe's house. There was a glass over the chimney-piece in Dawe's painting-room, and on Hazlitt introducing K——, he described each as first giving a furtive glance at the glass and then at each other.

HAZLITT.—This is Mr. K——, Mr. Dawe.

DAWE.—Very happy to see Mr. K—— (looking first at K. and then at himself in the glass, and giving a sort of inward smile of self-congratulation, as much as to

say—"I don't see any great resemblance"). I think they say we are like each other, Mr. K——. I can't say I—exactly—see—any great similarity—(looking in the glass again). There is a little—something—to be sure—about the mouth—a sort of ——

K——. Why, no; I don't see much resemblance myself. There may, perhaps, be a little something in the forehead—a kind of ——

In short, each evidently piqued at the unsatisfactory nature of the portrait of himself, and each wondering how anybody could possibly think *him* like so ugly a person as the other. Hazlitt made out the scene capitally; you could see each party coquetting, as it were, with his own simular in the glass, and comparing it, with infinite self-satisfaction, with the living object before him.

There was a portrait of Holcroft which Dawe had painted, and which belonged to Mrs. Holcroft, and was to be engraved by Dawe for a *Life of Holcroft*, which Hazlitt was writing. Hazlitt said that he and Mrs. Holcroft went about it one day to Dawe's

rooms, and caught him in the act of making a duplicate of it.

He described very admirably a scene he had witnessed at the M——'s, between Mrs. M—— and Dawe, illustrating the contrast between the flowing, graceful, queen-like style and manner of the one, and the little, peddling, pimping, snipped manner of the other. Mrs. M. was speaking of a picture she had just seen of Sir Joshua's, of a lady, which she described in her fine way. "The face, Mr. Dawe, was remarkably fair—almost of a marbly *whiteness*, and on the cheek, to relieve this, there was a slight tinge of colour. The lady wore a perfectly *white* dress, and she was walking in a sort of garden scene, with a *white* wall behind her; and overhead there was floating along one *white* cloud, and by her side was growing one *white* lily."

The *contrast* to all this was furnished by the little snipped and cut-up interruptions of Dawe, thrown in between every stately pause in the description. "Ah!—Yes!—Indeed!—Yes, very nice—ay, indeed."

Speaking of Haydon to-night, h

had just been at O——'s, and that Mrs. O—— had told him how it was that her husband (who was at that time in very slender circumstances) had been compelled to lend him (Haydon) fifty pounds. She said—"Oh, sir, my husband *could not help* lending it to him—he *would* have it. Why, sir, he came round here, behind the counter, followed my husband up to the very window, and said he *must* have it—he could not do without it, and almost seemed as if he would have *taken* it if it had not been given to him." "And so," said Hazlitt, "O—— was obliged to lend it to him, to prevent his taking it out of the till!"

The following was intended by Hazlitt to form part of one of his Conversations with Northcote (*Boswell Redivivus*) in the New Monthly Magazine, but was suppressed by the editor. It relates to Haydon, the historical painter.

"He then asked me if I had seen anything of H——? I said, yes; and that he had vexed me; for I had shown him some fine heads from the Cartoons, done about a hundred years ago (which appeared to me to

prove that since that period those noble remains have fallen into a state of considerable decay), and when I went out of the room for a moment, I found the prints thrown carelessly on the table, and that he had got out a volume of Tasso, which he was spouting, as I supposed, to let me understand that I knew nothing of art, and that he knew a great deal about poetry.

“I said I never heard him speak with enthusiasm of any painter or work of merit, nor show any love of art, except as a puffing-machine for him to get up into and blow a trumpet in his own praise. Instead of falling down and worshipping such names as Raphael and Michael Angelo, he is only considering how he may, by storm or stratagem, place himself beside them, on the loftiest seats of Parnassus, as ignorant country squires affect to sit with judges on the bench. He told me he had had a letter from Wilkie, dated Rome, with three marks of admiration, and that he had dated his answer ‘Babylon the Great,’ with four marks of admiration. Stuff! Why must he always ‘out-Herod Herod?’ Why must the p^r

where he is always have one note of admiration more than any other? He gave as his reasons, indeed, our river, our bridges, the Cartoons, and the Elgin Marbles—the two last of which, however, are not our own. H. should have been the boatswain of a man of war: he has no other ideas of glory than those which belong to a naval victory, or to vulgar noise and insolence; not at all as something in which the whole world may participate alike. I hate ‘this stamp exclusive and professional.’ He added that Wilkie gave a poor account of Rome, and seemed, on the whole, disappointed. He (Haydon) should not be disappointed when he went, for his expectations were but moderate. ‘Ay,’ said Northcote, ‘that is like the speech of a little, crooked, conceited painter of the name of Edwards, who went to Italy with Romney and Humphreys, and when they looked round the Vatican, he turned round to Romney and said, ‘Egad, George, we’re bit.’”

“I said that when I heard stories of this kind, of even clever men who seemed to have no idea or to take no interest except in what

they themselves could do, it almost inclined me to be of Peter Pindar's opinion, who pretended to prefer taste to genius: 'Give me,' said he, 'one man of taste, and I will find you twenty men of genius.' N. replied, 'It is a pity you should be of that opinion, for all your acquaintances are great geniuses; and yet, I fancy, they have no admiration for anybody but themselves.' "

XII.

HAZLITT AS AN ARTIST.—HAZLITT AT A PRIZE FIGHT.
HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGHT.

THE most favourable circumstances under which Hazlitt could be seen were those under which he was the most entirely himself—that is, during a few hours or days spent with him in a country ramble, at a distance from all his accustomed haunts and associations. It was then that his spirit had free leave to move and meditate at its own will, and to set forth all its finer qualities and attributes, undeteriorated by any of those peculiar habits of feeling and of thought which had been engendered by a life, the last twenty years of which had been spent in a manner anything but congenial to the tone and tendencies of its nature.

I passed much time with Hazlitt under these favourable circumstances, and will briefly refer to one or two of these passages in his life; because they will show him in a

very different light from that in which he was ordinarily seen, even by his most intimate associates; but a light, if I mistake not, in which he would always have appeared, had not the untoward events of his early years cast him for ever out of that steady current of mingled thought and action and emotion, which might and ought to have formed "the even tenor of his way" to a wise, honourable, and happy manhood, and a calm and lengthened old age.

Probably most of the readers of these Recollections are aware that Hazlitt was intended for an artist, and had studied and practised for some few years with this view. Had he persevered steadily in this line of pursuit, there can be little doubt that he would have been all that I have supposed above; and that, in being thus, the world would not have lost any material portion of those of his literary works that are worth preserving, and would have gained into the bargain one of the greatest painters that ever lived. Those artists and lovers of art who are acquainted with the half-dozen or so of extraordinary portraits from Hazlitt's pencil

that still exist, and that were painted at the very outset of his brief career as an artist, will, I am sure, absolve me from the charge of exaggeration in the latter part of the above proposition : and those who knew the character and constitution of his mind will, I think, agree with me in opinion that, whatever else he might have been, he *must* have been a great and distinguished writer. This latter was a necessary consequence, from his unequalled capacity for the perception of *the truth* in whatever presented itself to his notice, added to his irrepressible passion for setting it forth as he saw it. In this age of writers, Hazlitt could not have helped being a writer ; and his writings would probably not have possessed a single one of the faults that they do possess, if he had not been a writer by profession—a writer for his daily bread.

But this last fact was not only the fertile cause of all the errors of his writings ; it was the source of all the misery of his life. Witness his two Essays on “ The Pleasures of Painting.” They alone—coupled with the fact that the performances to which they

so beautifully and interestingly refer, are in their way first-rate works of art—are sufficient to bear me out in both the propositions I have hazarded above. They show at every page a heart and mind made for the reception and enjoyment of those “calm pleasures and majestic pains” which constitute the sum and substance of a wise and good man’s life, and which make the very material on which they live and grow.

That exquisite sensibility to the beauties of external nature and of high art which Hazlitt so eminently possessed, and that sympathy with and delight in them which, however, are not its necessary accompaniment, would alone have sufficed to carry him smoothly and happily down the stream of life, without the necessity for resorting to those artificial sources of excitement which do but recruit and multiply the ills they momentarily assuage.

The unfailing recurrence of occupation, both mental and bodily, which his intended profession would have furnished to him, might have wholly prevented that unwholesome pondering over its own thoughts, which

was the error and the foible of Hazlitt's mind. From having in early life nothing to do but to *think*, he used to brood over the embryo offspring of his contemplations, beyond the natural and healthful term of gestation, till they at last came forth maimed of their fair proportions, or were overlaid and killed by too much care and cherishing.

The subsequent necessity of providing by his pen for his daily wants cured him of this error, so far as related to the various subjects on which he wrote ; and all his best things were written under the actual and immediate pressure of this, his only motive for writing—at least latterly. But the radical error alluded to stayed by him to the last, in regard to all that concerned his merely personal opinions. He thought about things and people till the very faculty of thought left him, and he could only *feel* ; and he always felt according to his fears, never according to his wishes or his hopes.

But I was about to speak of Hazlitt at those periods—"few and far between"—when he was, so to speak, his own man—when he was all that Nature and Contemplation had

made him; and when all that Passion and Circumstance had grafted upon his natural character remained dormant, or was laid aside.

The first time that I obtained this favourable view of him was at a very early period of our acquaintance; and I believe it contributed greatly to fix and confirm that feeling of regard and interest towards him which all that I had heretofore seen of him had called forth, while all that I had *heard* of him was calculated to persuade me that his character was incapable of exciting any but an opposite impression.

I had, at the period in question, the prevalent passion for prize-fighting strong upon me. (Gentle reader, it is a long while ago, and I know better now. Howbeit, it is the prize-fighters themselves who have cured me—not the preachers against them.) The famous fight between the Gas Man and Neate was to be fought in a few days, and it was the talk of the town. Hazlitt had never seen a prize-fight, and in talking with him on the subject a few nights before the appointed time, I happened to say (on his exp

curiosity on the matter) that, if ever he meant to see one, now was his time ; for that there had never been such a one before, and never would be such another. I told him that I was going ; and added (half in joke, half earnest) that he could not do a better thing than go with me, and make an "article" about it for the New Monthly. I little thought that he would take me at my word ; for the time was the depth of winter, the place of meeting at least sixty miles from London, and on account of the extraordinary interest that was excited about the event, all sorts of extra difficulties and obstacles were in the way of the undertaking. Moreover, what at that period were to me (a very young man) only pleasant stimulants to the enterprise, must, as I supposed, appear to *him* insurmountable impediments. He talked, indeed, of going, and I promised to let him know the exact place and time. But that a man who would certainly not have stepped across the room to see a Coronation, and who would often sit silent and motionless over his breakfast-things till seven or eight o'clock at night, from pure incapa-

city to take the trouble of moving off his chair and putting on his shoes to go out, should, under any inducement, even think of travelling sixty or seventy miles on a winter's night, with the almost certainty of meeting with no comfort or accommodation when he got there, and no probable means of getting back again, perhaps, for two or three days—to say nothing of the expense, the previous trouble of arrangement, &c.—seemed out of the question.

However, on the morning of the day before that fixed for the fight, I let him know my arrangements; and he still said he *thought* he should meet me at the time and place I named, which was, I remember, the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, at ten o'clock at night, to start by the Salisbury night-coach, which arrived at the nearest town to the appointed spot at about five o'clock in the morning.

As I expected, he did not make his appearance; and after a perishing ride of seven hours—a nap of two or three, on the coffee-room *table* (for not even a chair was to be had) of the inn where the coach put me down—with my feet (to keep them warm) in

great-coat pockets of one of the six or seven "strange bedfellows" with whom prize-fighting, like misery, makes a man acquainted—a hasty but hearty and healthy breakfast—and a walk of five or six miles to the spot of meeting—who should I see among the first persons I recognised on the ground but William Hazlitt! He had wisely calculated that it would never do to arrive houseless and supperless at five o'clock on a winter's morning; so he had lounged into Piccadilly at eight o'clock over night, found a vacant place in the Bristol mail—got into it—somehow or other lighted upon a comfortable bed at the same town where I had stopped—slept and breakfasted comfortably—and there he was, lively as a bird, gossiping gaily with his friend, Joe Parkes, whom he had just met on the ground—and as "eager for the fray" as the most interested and knowing of "the fancy."

I was too anxious about the "great event" I had come seventy miles to see to take much notice of its effects upon Hazlitt while it was going on. But after it was over we joined company; and I then found that he

had taken the most profound metaphysical as well as personal interest in the battle; and I never heard him talk finer or more philosophically than he did on the subject—which he treated—and justly, I think—as one eminently worthy of being so considered and treated. As a study of human nature, and the varieties of its character and constitution, he looked upon the scene as the finest sight he had ever witnessed; and as a display of animal courage he spoke of the battle as nothing short of sublime. I found that he had paid the most intense attention to every part of the combat, had watched the various chances and changes of its progress with the eye and tact of an experienced amateur, and could have given (and, in fact, afterwards did give in the *New Monthly Magazine*) an infinitely better, because a more characteristic and intelligible, account of its details, than the professional reporters employed for that purpose.

If I mistake not, *this* was the faculty in which Hazlitt exceeded any other man that perhaps ever lived—the faculty in which his *genius* consisted. A practical musician can

play anything "at sight," as the phrase is. But Hazlitt could perceive and describe "at sight" the characteristics of anything, without any previous study or knowledge whatever, but by a species of intellectual intuition. Other men become acquainted with things progressively, and with more or less quickness and precision, according to their capacity and to the attention they bestow. But Hazlitt *felt* them at once. They did not gradually engrave themselves upon his perceptive faculties, but struck into them at once as by a single blow. This peculiarity was of universal application in respect to Hazlitt, and it was the secret of his unequalled critical faculties ; for if his criticisms themselves were often (perhaps always) more or less defective, on account of the comparatively little of steady attention that he gave to the subject of them, his critical *faculties* have perhaps never been surpassed.

XIII.

OUR JOURNEY HOME FROM THE FIGHT.—HAZLITT'S
TALK BY THE WAY.—THE PHILOSOPHY OF TASTE
AND SMELL.—SCHOOL DAYS.—THE "NOUVELLE
HÉLOÏSE."—HAZLITT'S DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE.

OUR journey home from the fight offered one of those instances which few of Hazlitt's friends can even have conceived possible, and fewer still have enjoyed—that of seeing him for eight-and-forty hours together as happy as a boy or a bird; as free from all seeming consciousness of the ills which *his* "flesh," above that of all other living men, was "heir to," as if some kind genius had charmed his memory and imagination to sleep. Yet that no such process had taken place was clear, from the delightful manner in which both those faculties were called into play, in the Table Talk in which the pleasant hours were passed.

Having settled to proceed together on our journey home, we started immediately after the business of the day was concluded with the intention of sleeping at a ne

bouring town, if we could get comfortable accommodation there, and if not, of proceeding onwards towards London, and taking the chance of anything that might present itself on the way.

We soon found that the latter was the only course; and having reconnoitred, and made our way out of the town, which resembled nothing but a place just entered pell-mell by a besieging army, the whole of its length being one mass of vehicles jammed together in a motionless state, and all the pathways and interstices filled up by pedestrians, every individual of the whole living mass presenting in their faces, more or less, evidence of the excitement of the hour,—we got upon the London road, and, soon giving the go-by to *the* subject, which we had now (for the present) had enough of, relapsed into that natural and self-suggestive talk which is the only thing deserving the name of “conversation,” and in which Hazlitt excelled all men I have ever known, provided he had (as in my case) a good listener, and one who could give the cue when it was wanting, without ever desiring to keep the

ball in his own hands for a moment longer than was necessary to preserve it from falling to the ground.

It was a beautiful sunshiny afternoon, I remember, with a mild sharpness in the air, which Hazlitt seemed every now and then to drink in and snuff up with a boyish delight, while he gazed and remarked on the pleasant scenery we were passing through, as if the feeling and sight of "the country" had restored to him those times and associations which it seemed to be the sole business of his ordinary every-day life (not to forget, but) to brood over with a melancholy and mortal regret. Here, however, they seemed to come back like "angel" rather than demon visits, and to bring with them nothing but a grave and quiet satisfaction.

Some remark of his on the curious manner in which *smells* bring back to us the scenes with which they have been associated in years long past, called for a remark from me which I was surprised to find was entirely new to him, but the truth of which he immediately admitted, namely, that certain *tastes* produce this effect in a still more

manner. I said that to that day (and it is the same at this) I could never taste green mustard and cress without its calling up to my mind, as if by magic, the whole scene of my first school-days, when I used to grow it in my little bit of garden in the inner playground; that every individual object there present used to start up before me with all the distinctness of actual vision, and to an extent of detail which no effort of memory could accomplish without this assistance; and that *nothing but the visible objects* of the scene presented themselves on these occasions.*

* I have now, while I am writing, tried the experiment in question, as a matter of intellectual inquiry not unworthy the reader's attention. And as I sit in my little metropolitan study, thirty years after the objects in question have quitted my sight (and twenty years after they have *ceased to exist*!)—with nothing visible to my bodily eyes but smoke-enveloped lines of blank brick-work, cowering, as it were, beneath a dense canopy of dun-yellow vapour, and relieved only by gigantic chimneys, alternately breathing and vomiting forth volumes of black noisome smoke—on the dim face of this seeming *picture*, which is all that presents itself to my view as I look from my window, I see, as I taste the pungent charm, a vivid and beautiful *reality* projected—a sort of *fata morgana*, conjured up from the mysterious sea of memory, in which “nothing is but what is not,” and

Hazlitt illustrated the fact by several instances in his own case, connected with smells; and he said that the observation had

yet which shuts out for the time all else that is, or was, or is to be. I see the pleasant dwelling-house by the road-side, with its white rough-cast walls looking at intervals through the various trees that embower and embosom it, even to its crimson chimney-tops; the little gateway, leading from the public road (with its overarching bar of iron and its sonorous bell), where I used to see the frequent equipage stop that *might* have brought my own parents to visit me; the little alley of laurel, laurestinus, and seringa, through which they would have to pass before reaching the house, stepping (one step down) into the comfortable low-roofed parlour, with its wainscoted walls and window-seats, into which visitors were ushered. I see the climbing rose-trees and honeysuckles on which those windows looked, and the distant play-ground beyond, and the long play-field beyond that, at the commencement of which were our little strips of gardens; and the long bare white-walled schoolroom, projecting from the pretty house like an ugly excrescence; and the little wicket at the further end of it, leading to the kitchen-garden; and the old yew-tree, on the right hand, close within the wicket, with its ruby and glutinous berries; and the high blank paling, which ran all along the opposite side of the play-ground, to the top of which thrice only in the year we might climb and look over without breach of orders, namely, the days of the Easter Hunt, and of Fairlop and Harlow Bush Fairs: for the road led to those still famous scenes of plebeian pleasure.

My memory falters. I taste once more of the plant

been first suggested to him by Mr. Fearn, in whose metaphysical work, he said, the fact was first brought to bear on our mental operations. And he instanced, I remember, Mr. Fearn's remark, that certain associations of ideas brought back to him, as if it were actually existing, *the smell of a baker's shop at Bassora*, as one of the finest examples on record of the far-reaching powers of the human senses when duly connected with the imagination. He spoke, too, I remember, in the very highest terms of Mr. Fearn's powers of metaphysical investigation, de-

"that takes the reason prisoner"—and lo! the whole vicinity expands before my sight like a panorama! The pretty low-lying church; the stately grove of elms running through the very centre of the village; "the shop;" the back-winding lane, leading to the forest, where the great pear-tree overhung the wall of "the Doctor's" garden, and offered a portion of its yearly burthen as fair game to those who dared risk the attainment of it; the "Naked Beauties" on the hill (a noble old mansion so called). In a word, the whole scene is present to me, "in its habit as it lived;" but with it (which is curious) there returns not a single *feeling* connected with the places or the period in question. The association is evidently a physical one purely. Altogether the subject is well worth that attentive examination and experiment which it has never yet received.

scribing them as second to none that had ever been employed on the subject.

In talk like this, ranging from the dizzy heights of

“Fate, free-will, and reason absolute,”

down to the level of those merely “personal themes,” in discussing which Hazlitt was equally happy and at home, we passed pleasantly over the first five or six miles of our homeward journey, by which time a return chaise overtook us, and the dusk coming on, we got into it, and, in an hour more, were snugly housed for the night at one of those most “comfortable” of all public domiciles, a third-rate country inn; and here, in a little wainscoted parlour on the ground floor, we were soon warmly and cosily ensconced by a blazing fire, with the tea-things on the table, the curtains let down, an early supper ordered of roast fowl and apple-pudding (of all things in the world—but we had had no dinner), a “neat-handed Phyllis” to wait on us (which was always a great point of comfort with Hazlitt), and an interminable evening before us, destined to engender a volume of Table Talk, at least as pleasant and instructive (on


one side, I mean) as any of those that have followed it in a more tangible form; for, as I have hinted before, Hazlitt's familiar talk, when he was in the proper cue for talking, had all the merits of his published writings, some which those never included, and not one of their faults—the greatest of which merits (let me add), and the source of all the others that are *peculiar* to this kind of talk was, that not a phrase of it would bear to be set forth in the trim array of printers' types.

Not that I remember a single one of those phrases, even had they been ever so fitted for a place in these Recollections,—which I must again take the liberty of repeating, profess to offer the *results*, not the *details*, of my intercourse with the subject of them.

One little circumstance, however, I will mention, because I think it is peculiarly characteristic of that wise and happy *balance* between all his various faculties and mental endowments, which so greatly contributed to give that almost oracular character to Hazlitt's decisions on moral and intellectual questions, which, when unbiassed by personal feelings and prejudices, they possessed beyond

those of any man that I ever knew. Almost all the evidences of mental weakness that we observe in distinguished men, and often much of their mental strength also, arise from some one class of faculties prevailing and predominating over all the rest. The understanding; the imagination, the sensibilities, the passions—one or other of these hold almost undivided sway in the great majority even of highly gifted and highly cultivated minds; and they not merely give the tone and colour, but modify the form and substance, of all their conceptions and operations. But with Hazlitt all these qualities were so equally blended and balanced, that they enabled him to see and appreciate, with a most “learned spirit of human dealing,” the relative value and virtue even of the opposite qualities and attributes that presented themselves to his notice and observation.

But I am making a magnificent preface to a tale that many of my readers may deem not worth the telling. What I was going to relate was, that, during a momentary interregnum in our talk, I had taken from my pocket and laid on the table a volume of



—what does the reader imagine, of all books in the world, to make one's travelling companion to a prize-fight? The "*Nouvelle Héloïse* !"

Gentle reader ! let me repeat, as before, it is a long while ago, and in the one case equally as in the other, the passion has become a thing of memory merely. I do not go a hundred miles to see a prize-fight now ; and, if I did, the "*Nouvelle Héloïse*" would not be the book I should take with me.

I put the book aside,—not thinking of looking into it ; for I had removed it from my pocket only because it incommoded me. But Hazlitt asked — "What's that?" I handed the book to him, with a smile ; and I shall not forget the burst of half-comic, half-pathetic earnestness with which he read the title—the "*Nouvelle Héloïse* !" And then his countenance fell as he turned over the pages silently, and the tears came into his eyes as he looked, for the first time, perhaps, for twenty years, on words, thoughts, and sentiments on which his soul had dwelt and banquetted in its early days, with a passionate ecstasy only equalled by that in

which they had been conceived and written ; for the “Nouvelle Héloïse” was the idol of Hazlitt’s youthful imagination, and he himself resembled its writer more curiously and remarkably than, perhaps, any one distinguished man ever resembled another.

But what I was chiefly about to remark was, the delight Hazlitt expressed at meeting with the work under *such* circumstances, and at the sort of feeling which *he* must have for it who could make it his companion to such a scene as we had just left. . “Why, then,” he said, “you actually had the ‘Nouvelle Héloïse’ in your pocket all the while you were watching those fellows this morning, mauling and hacking at each other, like devils incarnate ! Well, I confess, that’s a cut above me. I can ‘applaud the deed ;’ but to have done it is beyond me. In putting the book into my pocket, I should have had some silly scruples—some indelicate feelings of delicacy, come across me, and I should have left it at home. It’s the highest thing I remember—a piece of real intellectual refinement, by G—d ! and I congratulate you upon it.”

That this was to consider the matter too curiously, the reader will perhaps think, as I thought then, or the incident would not have made so strong an impression on me. I am not so sure I think so now. If not, however, it is, perhaps, that our thoughts grow ripe as our feelings fade away.

The above incident led, I remember, to some beautiful remarks of Hazlitt on the "*Nouvelle Héloïse*," and on the intellectual and personal character of Rousseau; but I shall not even attempt to detail them, for the same reason which has excluded almost all similar details from these Recollections—namely, that it is morally impossible to relate them without blending them (whether consciously or not) with the feelings and opinions of the relator, in a way that must divest them of all specific character, and also of that authenticity which constitutes the only real value of such details, or keeps them from degenerating into a deception and an impertinence.

I shall conclude my, perhaps, too lengthened notice of this excursion, by adding that, after a hearty supper, an early bed

(which was a novelty to both of us), and a gossiping breakfast the next morning, we mounted the first coach that passed for London, arrived there in the evening, and Hazlitt (at my suggestion) wrote in the next New Monthly a capital description of "The Fight," signed "Phantastes." I mention this, as the paper does not appear among his collected Essays; the title and subject being deemed unsuitable to the "ears polite" of Mr. Colburn's book customers, and only to be tolerated in the ephemeral pages of a periodical miscellany.

XIV.

HAZLITT AT FONTHILL.—AT BURLEIGH HOUSE.—AT
STOURHEAD.—HIS GREAT CRITICAL FACULTIES.

ON another occasion, I passed eight or ten days with Hazlitt, among scenes of peculiar interest, but not exactly of a nature to keep him in that good humour with himself which made his society so delightful, and in the absence of which, though his company was always in the highest degree interesting and instructive as a moral and intellectual study, it was not what one would have chosen purely for the sake of the companionship it afforded.

The place where I met him on this occasion was no other than Fonthill Abbey, which had just been thrown open to the public curiosity, after having remained up to that time a sealed book from the day of its mysterious creation. I was, by the favour of its new proprietor, staying in the house (with a view to a detailed description of its treasures of art, and of the beautiful domain

surrounding it, which I was preparing for the pages of a periodical work); and I found that Hazlitt was also staying there, but was absent at the time of my arrival.

We met the next day, and were much together during the time we stayed; and though he was anything but at ease and at home in those scenes of artificial luxury and overstrained refinement which surrounded us here, yet the locality happened to be one with which many of his early associations were connected; and we made several excursions in the neighbourhood, which afforded some of the most pleasant and profitable hours I ever spent with him.

Hazlitt particularly piqued himself on his skill in cicerone-ship; and when he was in good health and spirits, there was nothing pleased him better than to accompany a friend to some celebrated collection of pictures, with which he himself was familiar, but which the party accompanying him had not seen before; and the first place he proposed that we should go to see was Sir Richard Colt Hoare's, which is situated a few miles from Fonthill.

On these occasions it was very curious and characteristic to observe the manner in which the mere feelings and impressions of his youthful enthusiasm were blended with the critical knowledge and judgment of his after years,—each moulding and modifying the other into forms which neither could have assumed of themselves, and which, if they did not offer a very just estimate of the objects to which they were applied, offered that which was infinitely more characteristic and interesting, as illustrations of the mind and spirit in which they were generated.

Not that the actual *criticisms* which Hazlitt pronounced on these occasions—when he pronounced such at all—were in any material degree impaired in value by the mere *impressions* which had preceded them in his mind. But it was these latter that he loved chiefly to recur to, and which, to my thinking, were even more instructive and valuable than his formal criticisms; because, with him, the *first impression* was always the germ and the foundation of all that he might afterwards have to say or to write on any topic of this kind. It was in the astonishing

depth and quickness of his first insight into any object of art, that his unequalled critical faculty consisted ; and all his written criticisms on actual objects of art consisted of the impressions thus received, long before he ever thought of becoming a critic at all. Nor did he much care to modify the impressions, by any after accessions of knowledge that might have come to him from other sources ; which will account for many instances that might perhaps be pointed out in which his criticisms are erroneous or exaggerated, and some in which they must be wholly unintelligible except to those who are acquainted with the manner in which they have been produced. Conceive, for instance, a man writing a detailed notice of a picture that he had not seen for twenty years—that he then saw only once, and that he saw at a period and under circumstances when, for him, all things were attired in “the glory and the freshness of a dream;” but which he was to describe when every ray of that freshness and beauty had not merely “faded to the light of common day,” but was changed into mortal clouds and

shadows, that overhung the Present like a pestilence, and blotted out the Future as if it were a thing not to be!

The truth is, that Hazlitt's extraordinary critical powers were available to him only by the light of the Past. His impressions on contemporary art were as little to be depended on as those on contemporary literature. The pictures that he had seen at the Louvre during the Peace of Amiens, and in the private galleries of England about the same period, he could describe with a more intimate sense of their merits and beauties than any other man; and he could convey to others that sense more vividly than even actual observation would have presented it—especially when he had the objects before him to renew his impression of those individual details by which the general impression was first created in his mind. But to all other objects of a similar kind, if he did not wilfully close his eyes, at least he opened them only to look with that vague and vacant gaze in which the perceptive powers, instead of projecting themselves outward in tangible communion, as it were, with the

thing looked upon, seem to rest idle or paralyzed within us, and convey no distinct impressions to the sensorium. He saw, yet saw them not.

In going through the various apartments at Sir Richard Colt Hoare's, and afterwards at Burleigh House, I shall never forget the almost childish delight which Hazlitt exhibited at the sight of two or three of the chief favourites of his early days, and the way in which he expressed that delight, not so much to me as to the attendant who showed us the pictures, and on whom he seemed to look with a sort of superstitious respect,—as if the daily looking upon objects which were nothing less than sacred in Hazlitt's eyes, had transferred something of their sanctity to *him*.

On another day, while at Fonthill, we walked over to Salisbury (a distance of twelve miles) in a broiling sunshine; and I remember, on this occasion in particular, remarking the extraordinary physical as well as moral effect produced on Hazlitt by the sight and feel of "the country." In London the most inobservant person could scarcely pass him

in the street without remarking the extreme apparent debility, almost amounting to helplessness, of his air and manner. He used to go drooping and faltering along, like a man just risen from a bed of sickness, seeming scarcely able to support himself without holding by the railings or leaning against the walls; and invariably looking prone upon the ground, to which he seemed ready to fall at every step. But in the country—especially upon a vast open plain or heath, like that over which our path on the present occasion chiefly lay—he was like a being of another species; his step firm, vigorous, and rapid—his look eager and onward, as if devouring the way before it—and his whole air and manner buoyant and triumphant, as if a new sense of existence and new bodily powers had been breathed into him by the objects around.

He spoke on this occasion of having repeatedly walked from forty to fifty miles a day in that fashion formerly, and said that he could do so now with perfect ease and pleasure. Yet in London (as I have hinted elsewhere) he would sit, as if nailed to his

chair, from morning till late at night, day after day, for weeks together—merely creeping out to the theatre or the Southampton at ten or eleven o'clock at night, and there taking his seat silently again, and sitting till he was fairly warned away by the extinguished lights and the closing doors.

Another of our excursions was to that gem of English villages, Stourhead, adjoining the seat of Sir Richard Colt Hoare. I have never seen anything in its way so pretty as this village. Indeed it was *too* pretty, for it gave one the idea, not of a real country village, but of the imitation of one in some prince's or nobleman's park; and, knowing it *not* to be so, the effect was odd, and, in some degree, unpleasant. It reminded one of a village beauty, too well dressed to admit the belief that she had been her own tire-woman; or, in another way, it looked like one of those pretty Paris grisettes who sit for half an hour under the hairdresser's hands before they show themselves in their shops in the morning. All the houses looked as if they had just been newly coloured and painted. The windows glittered like crystal—the

little green in the centre was like the *lawn* of a Londoner's villa—and the whole picture was set in the framework of a superb laurel hedge, of immense height and depth, which ran in an unbroken line round the adjoining pleasure-grounds of Sir R. Hoare. We found, too, an exquisite little inn, with a landlady as trim and *point-de-vice* in all about her as the village over which she seemed to preside. Here we slept, breakfasted the next morning, and then returned to the Abbey.

XV.

HAZLITT'S SYMPATHY WITH STRANGE PEOPLE.—ANEC-
DOTES OF BECKFORD.—HONEST ROGUERY.

It was during this stay at Fonthill Abbey that I had occasion to remark one among many other instances in Hazlitt, of that peculiarity which he himself so often observed and smiled at in Charles Lamb—unconscious, I believe, that it existed in at least an equal degree in himself, though modified by another feature in his personal character. Whenever he showed special signs of favour towards any one in a menial stage of life, it was sure to be some out-of-the-way being, who was the laughing-stock or the pity of everybody else; and among the people of the late immense establishment of Mr. Beckford who had been retained in the service of the new proprietor of the place (Mr. Farquhar) was a lout of a footboy, who was in special favour with Hazlitt. He had re been promoted from the plough!

servants' hall, and had been appointed to take up Hazlitt's breakfast to his room in the morning, and to give him any information he might need connected with the object of his visit to the place—which was similar to mine. Now, a personal civility to Hazlitt won his heart at once; and in the case of menial servants he always took care to lay the foundation for this (when he could afford to do so) by a liberal gratuity *beforehand*. And he had done this in Tom's case so effectually that the lad took him for nothing less than a lord in disguise, and treated him accordingly; at the same time perceiving, by a sort of menial instinct, that his benefactor was in fact not much more lordly or urbane in his mere "complement extern" than he himself was, and thereupon assuming a most lacquey-like superiority over him, in virtue of the information which he (Tom) possessed and the other party wanted. He used to direct Hazlitt as to the various localities of the neighbourhood; show him about the grounds; and in one or two instances, I remember, ventured to go the forbidden length of naming the name of the late lord

of the Abbey. Among other things, he told Hazlitt that he had *once* (during an almost life-long servitude on the spot!) actually caught a sight of the visible presence of the said mysterious being, who, in his solitary wanderings about the grounds of the Abbey, having encountered the unlucky apparition of Tom in those sacred precincts where he had no business, instead of ordering his instant dismissal from the service (which was the understood rule in such cases), in his infinite magnanimity merely desired him to "get out of the way."

The change which had come over the spirit of Tom since the downfall at the Abbey of this more than Eastern mystery and despotism, had worked an amusing alteration in him, the outward effects of which it was that took Hazlitt's fancy; and he used to take every opportunity that offered of talking with him on subjects connected with the late and present state of the place. While Tom, on his part, thus elevated to a companionship with "gentlefolks," and seeing those spots which had heretofore only echoed to a human footstep

(nobody could tell why) into a bear-garden and a public thoroughfare, was so completely mystified and moved from his propriety as to have become, for the nonce, a "character" well worth observation and study.

One great practical point in Tom's favour with Hazlitt, I remember, was, that he used, by hook or by crook, to procure him an inordinate quantity of cream for his breakfast and tea: and, in order to excuse himself from any improper imputation on his honesty in the affair, he used to confess, or rather to boast, with great *naïveté*, that all "that sort of thing" was now the understood privilege and "parquiset" of the establishment. "Lord bless'ee, zur, we all does it now, since Nabob 'a been gone away, and nobody be'nt the worse nur the wiser for it. Muster Phillips* is master now, and we does just as we likes." In fact, what Hazlitt admired in Tom was the simple honesty of his roguery. There was nothing Tom would not have done for him—such as stealing the best fruit from

* The "eminent" auctioneer under whose direction the property was preparing for the public sale, which shortly afterwards took place.

the hot-houses—harnessing the pet white ponies to the pony-phaeton, and driving him round the grounds, &c. &c.—excusing it all with a “ Lord bless’ee, zur, there’s no harm in it—nobody won’t know nothin about it!” The only immorality, in Tom’s eyes, was—to be found out.

XVI.

HAZLITT WITH HIS INTIMATES.—WILLIAM HONE, THE PARODIST.—HIS AMIABLE CHARACTER.—EVENINGS AT THE SOUTHAMPTON.—THE FORCE OF IMAGINATION.

IF I were required to name the person among all Hazlitt's intimates in whose society he seemed to take the most unmingled pleasure—or I should perhaps rather say, with whom he felt himself most at ease and “comfortable”—I should say it was the late William Hone, author of the celebrated “Parodies,” &c. With almost everybody else Hazlitt seemed to feel some degree of restraint on some point or other. With some (as with Northcote for instance) he seemed to feel himself bound to listen more than he liked to listen; with others he felt called upon to talk more than it pleased him to talk. With one class of persons—the professed literati of the day—he tried to shine; with another class—the opposite of the

above—he tried *not* to shine, but, on the contrary, to be and to seem not a whit superior to those about him. In the company of females, whoever they might be, or of whatever class—even with those few who were uniformly kind and cordial in their reception and treatment of him, and of whose respect and good-will he could not reasonably doubt—there was always apparent a dash of melancholy and despondency; and also a resentful feeling, which showed itself from time to time, not in anything he said, but in the fearful expression which used to pass across his face, and which he never even attempted to suppress or conceal—an expression that can only be described by saying that it gave the look of an incarnate demon's to a face that, in the absence of that look, indicated the highest and noblest attributes of the human intellect and character. In speaking of this look, I may remark that, though no *obvious* cause was ever apparent for it, I never remember to have once observed it without being able immediately assign the cause, even though I have not verily given it myself.


always something touching more or less remotely or nearly the *personal* condition and circumstances of the man ; and I might add, it was almost always connected with one of three topics—the downfall of Napoleon—the abuse of some deserving writer from party motives—and (in the case where females were present) in reference to the passion of Love. On each of these topics there existed a morbid part in Hazlitt's mind, which no one—friend, foe, or perfect stranger—could touch, or even approach, without exciting a feeling of mingled agony and resentment, that showed itself as I have just described. These topics were strings in the noble instrument of his mind which had been so early and violently overstrained, that nothing could ever restore them to their healthful temperament, or cause them to give out tones capable of making anything but “harsh discords,” or music the pathos of which was lost in the pain.

But in the company of females, the dreadful look I have spoken of (for such it was) used to come over Hazlitt's face much more frequently than at any other time ; because

the great source of those agonized feelings which called it forth was connected with that habitual and almost insane fear I have before alluded to, that no woman could look upon him without a feeling of mingled terror and distaste at least, if not disgust.

If I have been tempted to notice more at length than it may seem to deserve this singular feature in Hazlitt's social and personal character, it is because it was fraught with an almost painfully pathetic interest, that has perhaps never been equalled, either in kind or degree, even in fictitious narrative, except in that divine Eastern story of Beauty and the Beast.

It has been my lot during the last fifteen years to associate more or less familiarly with a large proportion of the most intellectual men of an age which perhaps deserves to be characterised as the most intellectual that the world ever knew; and I confess that no part of such intercourse has connected itself with more perfectly pleasant recollections and associations than do the three or four evenings that I remember to have spent with



Hazlitt and Hone, in the little dingy wainscoted coffee-room* of the Southampton Arms, in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. There, after having dreamed and lingered at home over his beloved tea from five or six o'clock till ten or so at night, Hazlitt used to go every evening, for years, to take his supper (or dinner, as the case might be) of either cold roast beef or rump-steak and apple tart; for he rarely tasted anything else but these—never by choice, unless it were a roast fowl, a pheasant, or a brace of partridges, when his funds happened to be unusually flourishing. And there you were sure to find him, in his favourite box on the right-hand side of the fireplace, sitting (if alone) upright, motionless, and silent as an effigy, brooding over his own thoughts, and, at the same time, taking in and turning to intellectual account every word that was uttered by the few persons who used at that time habitually to frequent the house, and to most of whom he was known; at the same

* Since (as I have hinted in a previous section, see vol. ii. p. 317), "improved from off the face of the earth," for all purposes of old local association.

time, casting furtive glances at the door every time it gave intimation of opening, partly in the hope, partly in the fear, that the in-comer might be some one of his own particular intimates, who came there, as he knew, solely to seek him.

I say that he looked for a companion under these circumstances with a mixed feeling of hope and fear. In fact, it was always a moot point whether Hazlitt liked better to be alone with his own thoughts and imaginations, or interchanging them with those of other people ; nor do I believe that he himself could ever have decided the point satisfactorily to himself in any given case. But when accident decided it, the result seemed sure to be the right one—always provided the party disjoining him from himself did not happen to be one of those three or four unlucky individuals towards whom he felt a sort of constitutional antipathy—as some men do to cats. But such was his humane sense of the forbearance and toleration we owe to each other, and his delicate consideration in exercising these, that even the persons in question were sure to go away with

the impression that they had made themselves peculiarly agreeable to him. And even if the truth happened to be so exactly the other way that he could bear the infliction no longer, the worst he used to do was to plead illness (as he safely might—for this sort of thing disturbed his whole system for a day or two), get up, and go away to the theatre—begging they would come and sit with him some other night!

There was something in the social and intellectual character of William Hone peculiarly suited to the simple, natural, and *humane* cast of Hazlitt's mind—using the latter epithet in its broad and general sense, as implying a sympathy with all the qualities of our nature—its weaknesses no less than its strengths. His manner (I speak of him when in Hazlitt's society—where alone I was accustomed to see him) united the most perfect freedom, familiarity, and *bonhomie*, with that delicate deference and respect which the extraordinary intellectual powers of Hazlitt were calculated to excite in all who were capable of duly appreciating them. He also never failed to keep Hazlitt in that active

good-humour with himself which was so indispensable to his personal comfort, and to that of all who conversed with him. And he effected this by a species of flattery which is not merely innocent in itself, but is the just meed of high intellectual superiority, and is never withheld from it but by those who either envy its pretensions or dispute them ; a flattery which consists in the instant recognition and allowance of any new light thrown upon the topic of converse, or any false one dispelled, in place of that petty and paltry disputation for disputation's sake which is the miserable characteristic of all ordinary English conversation—even of that which formally claims that name ; in short, that flattery which consists in the delighted admission and reception of the Truth the instant it is made apparent to us, instead of the dogged denial of it on that very account, and because we ourselves have hitherto been blind to it, or have seen its semblance in error and falsehood.

There was also about Hone a buoyancy and joyousness of ~~of~~ wherever Hazlitt met ; ~~any~~ memory.


and imagination in a beautiful and affecting manner. Himself the very type of intellectual dejection and despondency, the mere sight of the opposites of these in others, instead of aggravating the malady, as it does in most cases, utterly dispelled it for the moment, and made him feel, not joyous himself, but as if he could become so if he chose by the mere force of those fine sympathies with his fellow-beings which kept the constitutional melancholy of his temperament from sinking into that fatal disease which it so often assumes. For the effect I speak of was not a mere association of ideas, carrying him back in imagination to the time when he himself was buoyant and happy; it was a complex action, arising, as I conceive, chiefly out of his deep and universal sympathies with human nature, but modified and blended, no doubt, by and with his unconscious recollections of that period of his life when "he too was an Arcadian." It was an association that not merely "played round his head," but "touched his heart" also.

In illustration of this sort of complex association of ideas, and its effect upon a

mind made up, like Hazlitt's, of almost equal proportions of our intellectual and our sentient natures, I will here refer to a simple fact that many of his associates must have observed as well as myself, and which never occurred without exciting in me an interest almost painful, yet blended with a peculiar and touching pleasure, precisely corresponding with that which we derive from unexpected touches of nature in lyrical or pastoral poetry. I have already stated that, from the time of my first acquaintance with him, Hazlitt had been a determined water-drinker. No temptation ever induced him to transgress his rule of life in this respect; the only rule he ever prescribed to himself, or could have been likely to keep if he had. But this rule had been imposed upon him by the moral certainty that his life would be the cost of neglecting it; for, in the early part of his literary career in London, he had been led into an intemperate use of stimulants, which had at length wholly destroyed the healthful tone of his digestive organs, and made the utmost caution necessary to prevent those attacks, under one of which he died.

Of course, in our evening meetings at the Southampton and elsewhere, a glass of grog, or something of the kind, was not wanting to give that *social* flavour to our table-talk which was one of its most pleasant qualities. Indeed, Hazlitt himself could never bear to see the table wholly empty of some emblem of that "taking one's ease at one's inn," which was a favourite feeling and phrase with him; and immediately his supper-cloth was removed (for *his* corporeal enjoyment on these occasions was confined to the somewhat solid but brief one of a pound or so of rump steak or cold roast beef), he used to be impatient to know what we were each of us going to take; and, as each in turn determined the important point, he would *taste* it with us in imagination. It was his frequent and almost habitual practice, the moment the first glass was placed upon the table after supper, to take it up as if to carry it to his lips, then to stop for a few moments before it reached them, and then smell to the liquor and draw in the fumes, as if they were "a rich distilled perfume." He would then put the glass down slowly, without uttering a word; and

you might sometimes see the tears start into his eyes, while he drew in his breath to the uttermost, and then sent it forth in a half sigh, half yawn, that seemed to come from the very depths of his heart. At other times he would put the glass down with a less dejected feeling, and exclaim in a tone of gusto that would have done honour to the most earnest of gastronomes over the last mouthful of his *actual* ortolan, "That's fine, by G—d!" literally exhilarating, and almost intoxicating, himself with the bare imagination of it. He used almost invariably to finish this movement by falling back into a brief fit of dejection, as if stricken with remorse at the irreparable injury he had committed against himself, in having, by an intemperate abuse of a manifest good, for ever interdicted himself from the use of it; for no man ever needed more the judicious use of stimulants, or would, if he could have borne them, have found more unmingled benefit from them. But to him that which could alone have medicined his mental ills, was nothing less than deadly poison to his body.



XVII.

MORE EVENINGS AT THE SOUTHAMPTON.—BARRY CORNWALL.—MR. M——Y, A PHILOSOPHIC LAWYER.—MR. W——E, AN AMATEUR CRITIC.—HAZLITT'S CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF HIS FRIENDS.

I MIGHT here offer the reader some pleasant reminiscences connected with those evenings at the Southampton to which I have incidentally referred above. But the theme is so tempting, that, if I were to enter upon it formally, it would lead me too far from what I desire to keep before me as the chief object of attention. Besides which, Hazlitt himself has treated of those evenings in so delightful a manner (in his paper on "Coffee-house Politicians," in vol. ii. of the "Table Talk"), that I may not venture to touch them after him. But there are three or four individuals who used to form part of those pleasant *symposii*, to whom the nature of these Recollections calls upon me to refer more particularly than in a passing paragraph. The most distinguished of these was the amiable

and gifted poet, so universally known to the reading world under the name of Barry Cornwall. This gentleman used but seldom to grace our simple feasts ("of reason," or of folly, as the case might be); but when he did look in by accident, or was induced by Hazlitt's request to come, everything went off the better for his presence; for, besides the fact of Hazlitt's being fond of his society, and, at the same time, thinking so highly of his talents as always to talk his best when he (P——r) was a partaker in the talk, there is an endearing something in the personal manner of that exquisite writer, an appearance of gentle and genial sympathy with the feelings of those with whom he talks, which has the effect of exciting towards him that *personal* interest from which it seems itself to spring, and in the absence of which the better feelings and mental characteristics incident to social converse are seldom if ever called forth. In P——r Hazlitt always found a man of fine and delicate intellectual pretensions, who was nevertheless eager and pleased to listen, with attention and interest, to all the little insignificant details of his daily life

which so often made up the favourite theme of his conversation, and which must have seemed, to ordinary hearers, the most utter and empty common-place ; but from which Hazlitt (when encouraged by the interest I have spoken of, or not stilled into silence by its absence) used to extract materials for constructing the most subtle and profound theories of the human character, or themes for conveying the most deep-thoughted wisdom, or the most pure and touching morality. And, above all other themes, to P——r, and to him alone (except myself) Hazlitt could venture to relate, in all their endless details, those “affairs of the heart” in one of which his *head* was always engaged, and which happily always (with one fatal exception) evaporated in that interminable talk about them of which he was so strangely fond.

Not that Hazlitt confined his confidences on this head to P——r and myself. On the contrary, he extended them to almost every individual with whom he had occasion to speak, if he could, by hook or by crook, find or make the occasion of bringing in the topic. But, in general, he did this from a sort of

physical incapacity to avoid the favourite yet dreaded theme of his thoughts; and he did it with a perfect knowledge that his confidential communications were a bore to nine-tenths of those who listened to them, and consequently that the pleasure of the communication was anything but mutual. In fact, it must be confessed that the details of Hazlitt's dreamy *amourettes* had as little interest for anybody but the dreamer, as those of any other dreams have. But still they were *his* dreams, related and expounded by his own subtle and profound intellect; and, for my own part, I must say that I never listened to his accounts of them without learning something new and worth knowing of the human mind or heart, and often not without gaining glimpses and guesses into the most secret and sacred of their recesses, that I might have sought in vain elsewhere, or under any other circumstances whatever. I am therefore the less disposed to doubt, that the interest which P——r seemed to take in the ~~same~~ study was not an assumed one, merely] the
humour of one wh~~...~~ in

question, was looked upon and often treated as a child, even by some of his most admiring friends. The truth is, that Hazlitt *was* a child in this matter; yet at the same time he was a metaphysician, a philosopher, and a poet: and hence the (in my mind) curious and unique interest which attached to his mingled details and dissertations on this the most favourite of all his themes of converse, at least in a *tête-à-tête*; for he rarely, if ever, brought up the subject under any other circumstances.

Another of Hazlitt's favourite companions at the Southampton was a Mr. M——y, of whom he has made such pleasant mention in the essay noticed above, on "Coffee-house Politicians;" among which latter class, however, M——y was by no means included. M——y was (and is, I hope) a solicitor, of good practice, residing in a neighbouring Inn of Court, who never failed, when in town, to escape at night from the grave vacuity and bustling nonentity of the law, to enjoy, in his own quiet little box at the Southampton, over his interminable *goes* of gin-and-water, the occasional converse that

the chances of the evening might offer; and it was there that Hazlitt became acquainted with him, and their acquaintance never extended beyond the scene of its origination. Yet Hazlitt had a great respect and even personal regard for M——y, and always seemed to take pleasure in addressing and listening to him, which, however, he did invariably from the opposite side of the room, and, in nine cases out of ten, without the possibility of making out one-half of what M. said, partly from the very low tone of voice in which he was accustomed to speak (as if addressing himself or his glass of gin-and-water), but chiefly on account of the hour of Hazlitt's arrival being usually late enough to have allowed the aforesaid *goes* to effect their desiderated end, of so blending together into a pleasing confusion the confines of dream-land and reality, that the happy borderer used to murmur inwardly precisely like a man who talks in his sleep.

For my own part, often as I have talked and listened to M——y with unmingled pleasure, I have no recollection of having clearly understood a single sentence that he

ever uttered. Yet when you did catch a glimpse of opinion or a glance of meaning, it was invariably of a nature to impress you with that personal respect for the speaker which is one of the rarest of all the results of desultory conversation—most of all, of coffee-house conversation. In fact, M——y was a singular example of that *rara avis* in the Inns of Court, a man of the purest simplicity and the strictest honesty of mind, directed by sterling good sense, and modified by those high sentiments of personal honour, and that humane and liberal consideration for the feelings of others, which constitute the better part of the true “gentleman.”

Another of the circumstances which made the society of this person so agreeable to Hazlitt, was the fact of his having been formerly acquainted with the friends and associates of Hazlitt’s early life—Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge,—his (M.’s) family having lived, and being then still living, I believe, in the neighbourhood of the Cumberland lakes. The opportunity thus afforded Hazlitt of comparing notes, as it were, on the personal characters of those distinguished men, with one who had no

literary prejudices either for or against them (for M——y made no pretensions to a literary taste), was what he had never met with elsewhere; and he used it often and freely.

Another of the Southampton companions of Hazlitt, during my acquaintance with him, was a Mr. W——e, of the India House, a friend also of Charles Lamb's, and therefore associated by Hazlitt with some of his most pleasant recollections of that coterie the breaking up of which he so often regretted. W——e was (and I hope still is) a man of much shrewdness of observation, and considerable delicacy of taste, in matters both of literature and art; but so fastidious in his demands for every sort of perfection, that Hazlitt looked upon an evening spent with him as a kind of discipline of his critical faculties and judgment. For W——e had no more respect for an opinion or a dictum merely because it was Hazlitt's, than if it had been anybody else's. If it struck him as just and true, he ~~at once~~ admitted and appreciated it; but if tested it as freely as coming from the first

his day, (as he believed and acknowledged Hazlitt's to be—perchance with a modest mental reservation in favour of *one* other person!) as if it came from a mere novice or a nobody. And this habit of social intercourse, instead of piqueing Hazlitt, pleased and often excited him to an earnestness of discussion and illustration that we might else have been without. Accordingly, I have never heard Hazlitt talk better—by which I mean at once more amusingly and more instructively—than when W——e formed one of the talkers and listeners. W——e, too, had a taste (*of his own*, like all his other tastes and opinions) for pictures—which often furnished occasion for the display of Hazlitt's exquisite judgment in respect to the higher branches of art, and his profound insight into the principles on which their power, of affecting us rests. W——e's fastidiousness, too (for he was the “Man of Refinement” of our little knot of talkers), was not seldom a pleasant topic of examination in his absence; though it was never treated of in terms that he himself might not have been present to hear.

This latter fact reminds me to remark on what was deemed by many of Hazlitt's friends a crying defect in his intellectual character; I mean his disposition to discuss, in their absence, the qualities and characteristics of his friends and acquaintance, with a freedom, and even severity, of criticism, which were in no degree modified by the fact of the parties treated of being numbered among his intimate associates. This complaint against Hazlitt was, I am afraid, founded on something worse than a mistake. It was the result of a *self*-deception, at the best; in some cases it originated in a desire meanly to deceive others. Those who call speaking the truth of our friends behind their backs an act of treachery, and consider the treating of their vices, errors, and weaknesses as if they were facts or abstract propositions, as a *traducing* of them, will not be likely to see anything worse in inventing or propagating falsehoods of them for our sport or profit. Hazlitt discussed the characters of his friends and acquaintance simply *as if* they were his friends and acquaintance, and *were* so;—in other words, he

the only persons whose characters he *could* discuss with any foundation of fact and truth to go upon. If we desire to know and to make known the human heart and mind, are we to study it only in the dark, and state what we learn of it only when everybody is out of hearing? It is only our friends and acquaintance of whom we can by possibility know anything, of our own actual knowledge and observation : and

“ What can we reason but from what we know ? ”

Hazlitt carried this open and free discussion of the moral and intellectual qualities and characteristics of our friends and intimates to a pitch that perhaps it never before reached : but I do not call to mind that he ever carried it beyond the legitimate bounds which it has a right to claim for itself. He used it purely as an instrument of mental exercise and entertainment ; he never sacrificed what he believed to be the truth in the use of it. Moreover, he used it in reference to friends and foes alike ; he used it *equally* in favour of those to whom it was applied against them ; and he nev

sired that anybody should feel any scruple in using it, to the utmost extent of the truth, about himself.

At all events, what nobody who knew Hazlitt will deny is, that of all the various sources of social converse that he was accustomed to open and draw upon, no other furnished so admirable a mixture of instruction and amusement as the one in question. Get him to talk upon these "personal themes," and his fund of facts and illustrations was only surpassed by the unequalled sagacity and acuteness with which he applied them.

XVIII.

A VISIT WITH HAZLITT TO MR. JOHN HUNT, IN COLD-BATH FIELDS PRISON.—ESTIMATE OF J. HUNT'S CHARACTER.—HAZLITT'S PAINTINGS.

THERE was one man, and one only, towards whom Hazlitt seemed to cherish a feeling of unmingled personal affection and regard: that man was the late Mr. John Hunt, the elder brother of Mr. Leigh Hunt. Of him only Hazlitt was accustomed to speak uniformly in terms of unqualified admiration and esteem, as related to his personal character, no less than to his sound judgment and singular good sense. He used to say that if there was an honest man in the world, it was John Hunt. Nor did I ever hear him speak disparagingly of him in even the smallest particular of either character or conduct, except on one occasion. "Look here," said he, as I went in one morning as he was sitting at his breakfast, reading a letter he had just received—"Look here!"—handing me the letter, and pointing to the seal of it, on which

was a showy crest or coat-of-arms—"what d'ye think of that from John Hunt—from the reviler of aristocratic distinctions—the sturdy democrat—the only honest leveller and republican of them all—and the only one among them all who would die a martyr to his opinions, if he could propagate them by doing so?"

As some of my earliest and most vivid Recollections of Hazlitt are connected with this gentleman, I shall recur to them here.

The first evidence Hazlitt gave me of a disposition to cultivate my society—or rather to accept it—for he cultivated no one—his mind and genius were essentially contemplative, and disposed to that loneliness which contemplation asks—was his inviting me to accompany him one Sunday morning in a visit to Mr. John Hunt, who was then confined in the Coldbath Fields Prison, for a political libel which had appeared in the "Examiner" newspaper, of which the Hunts were the sole proprietors.* We went, and

* I have given, in a previous Section, some details respecting the conversation which took place on this visit, but no description of the visit itself.

found Mr. Hunt walking in the garden of the prison ; and I shall not forget the impression his appearance and manner made on me—corresponding so precisely as they did with the previous notion I had entertained of his personal character. I have never seen in any one else so perfect an outward symbol or visible setting forth of the English character, in its most peculiar and distinguishing features, but also in its best and brightest aspect, as in Mr. John Hunt. A figure tall, robust, and perfectly well-formed ; a carriage commanding and even dignified, without the slightest apparent effort or consciousness of being so ; a head and a set of features on a large scale, but cast in a perfectly regular mould ; handsome, open, and full of intelligence, but somewhat hard and severe ; an expression of bland benevolence, singularly blended with a marble coldness of demeanour almost repulsive, because almost seeming to be so intended :—such were the impressions produced on me by the first *abord* of John Hunt, as I saw him within his prison walls.

As I afterwards became acquainted with Mr. John Hunt and his accomplished brother,

and had all my first impressions confirmed about the former, I cannot let slip this occasion of testifying my belief, that the wholesome and happy change that has taken place in our political and social institutions since the period above referred to, and is still in happy progress, is owing in no small degree to the excellent individuals just named; for I verily believe that, without the manly firmness, the immaculate political honesty, and the vigorous good sense of the one, and the exquisite genius and varied accomplishments, guided by the all-pervading and all-embracing *humanity* of the other, we should at this moment have been without many of those writers and thinkers on whose unceasing efforts the slow but sure march of our political, and, with it, our social regeneration as a people mainly depends. Of this I am certain—that without the writings of Mr. Leigh Hunt himself, we should have missed a large measure of that high and pure tone of political and of social feeling from which everything is to be hoped in progress towards future good which) nothing need be

retrogression towards past evil. Many causes may interfere to retard the coming on of that fair pageant of political and social amelioration which already shines palpable and visible in the future, even like the coming on of the heavenly host in the "Paradise Lost." But there, in the "clear obscure" of the distance, the embodied splendour shines, and nothing can ever again abolish or blot it out.

Returning to my visit with Hazlitt to Mr. John Hunt, in the Coldbath Fields Prison, —after walking and conversing for some time in the prison garden, where we found Mr. Hunt, he led us to his apartment. Here the first thing that struck me was a picture over the mantelpiece, of an old countrywoman in a bonnet, which, it immediately occurred to me, was one I had heard spoken of as Hazlitt's first attempt as an artist. Hazlitt pointed to it with great apparent satisfaction, and asked me if I had ever seen it before, or knew what it was; but he seemed to shrink from distinctly saying *what* it was, and I was left to learn this from inquiry of Mr. Hunt himself.

The picture, I found, belonged to Hazlitt himself. He kept it as a precious relic, not of his success, but of his *failure*, as a painter—to which art he had at one time intended to devote himself. The reader will, probably, call to mind some beautiful reminiscences of this picture in his essay “On the Pleasures of Painting.” The picture itself is a striking production, evincing remarkable powers of pictorial effect, and not inferior in the force of its light and shade to some of Rembrandt’s efforts of a similar kind. I have never seen the picture since, and yet it is one of those very few which dwell in my memory, as if they were actually present to the bodily sight. It represented the head and shoulders merely of a very old country-woman, in a plain black bonnet, which shaded the upper half of the face, so as to leave the features almost black, and only to be distinguished by fixed attention; while the lower half of the face was in a full light. The expression (which was perfect in its way) was that of the utter stillness and vacuity of extreme old age. The skin was greatly elaborated, but so as to produ

general and uniform effect, and the oneness, of nature and of Rembrandt, not of the dry and hard detail of Denner or Holbein. But the peculiarity of the picture consisted in the extraordinary effect of the light and shade. The handling by which this effect was produced was coarse yet elaborate—bold and forcible, yet perfectly undecided, and that of a novice. But the whole was natural and true, in a remarkable degree, and it proved to demonstration that if Hazlitt had devoted and applied himself steadily to the art, he would greatly have distinguished himself in it. It proved, too, that he would have distinguished himself in precisely that way in which the leading features of his mind enabled him afterwards to shine as a writer—namely, in the perception and setting forth of the actual and simple *truth*, in relation to whatever he might take in hand; but especially of the truth as to human character.

The extreme apparent diffidence of Hazlitt in pointing my attention to this picture, reminds me to observe here, that it was the same in respect to everything else that he did.

He had in his possession, at this time, two noble copies, made by himself, from two of Titian's finest portraits in the Louvre—the Young Venetian Nobleman with the Glove ; and the Hyppolito di Medici. They used to hang in or stand about his rooms, without frames, and covered with dirt ; and I had seen and spoken of them several times, before I learned (which I did by mere accident) that they were painted by himself. Not that he underrated, or took a slight interest in them. On the contrary, he made no scruple of declaring them to be the best copies of Titian that he had ever seen ; and they were the only things to which I ever knew him attach any value, or feel the least desire to retain a property in. With the exception of these pictures, he never, during the whole of my acquaintance with him, possessed a single object of *property*—not even a favourite book. But these he cherished with a personal fondness that seemed to give them in his eyes all the character of living objects ; they seemed necessary to his very existence, and to preserve, as it were, that personal identity with his early life, in the absence of

which he would scarcely have felt that he continued to live at all, at least, to any of the real and valuable purposes of life. They were like *keepsakes* given to him by those twin brides of his soul, the *Ideals* of Truth and Beauty, which he had wedded in his youth, only to love and worship for a day, and then to be widowed from for ever, and weep over their grave for the rest of his existence. For such was, in fact, the secret cause of that profound melancholy which hung upon Hazlitt's mind like an incubus, and was the mortal disease that sunk him to a premature grave.

I afterwards possessed these two pictures, having purchased them at a sale of the property of Haydon, who valued them, and had purchased them of Hazlitt, when the latter had been forced, under some momentary pecuniary pressure, to sell them.

I do not remember anything in my intercourse with Hazlitt which gave me so much pleasure, as being thus enabled to preserve and restore these pictures to him. He used every now and then to come to me on purpose to look at them, as he had done

in the case of Haydon when they were in his possession. I remember he would stand and gaze on them with a look of deep sadness, not unmixed with pleasure, and almost with tears in his eyes—as one may imagine a fond parent gazing on the grave of his buried hopes; but he never said anything about wishing to have them, otherwise I should have offered them to him immediately. I, on the other hand, never thought of offering them spontaneously, knowing that, with all his frankness and delicacy in appreciating an act of good-will of this kind, he would not have been able to avoid attributing it in part to the want of my setting a due value on the pictures. At last he came one day, and after looking earnestly at the pictures for some time, he began, in that roundabout, awkward, and hesitating way, which he always fell into when he was not quite sure of his ground:—

“I say, Patmore, do you care about those pictures?”

“How do you mean?” said I—the
anticipated what was coming.

“Why—I mean”—said he he

"that is—would you like to part with them?"

"Part with them?" I said—repeating his words, and not knowing very well how to reply without the risk of hurting his self-love one way or the other—and there is nothing like awkwardness for engendering its like—"Part with them? Why I——" and I hesitated about coming to the point as much as he did.

"Ay"—continued he—"that is, not unless you like—only I"—(and here he seemed to get farther than ever from the mark) "I—that is, I think I can get you a good sum for them if you've a mind to part with them."

"If *that's* what you mean," I said, "I have *not* a mind to part with them. I thought, perhaps, you wanted them for yourself."

"Why, that's it," said he. "The fact is, so and so (naming some one whom I now forget) has been speaking to me about them. He'll give you forty or fifty pounds down for them, I think; and will let me have them back again when I like. What do you say?"

I said—"I'll not *sell* them—if that's what you mean—but *you* may have them if you like."

"Well," said he—"what shall I give you for them?"

"Nonsense!"—I replied—"nothing—or anything you like"—for I did not like to press his acceptance of them after he had told me what he thought of doing with them.

"Well—shall I give you ten pounds for them 'out and out,' on the chance of getting fifty?"

"Yes—if you like."

"But I've got no money."

"Well—give it me when you like."

"No—I'll give you a bill at two months (I think it was). I shall have money then."

I could hardly help smiling at this proposal: but I did not dare to do so, as he was very sensitive on points of this kind.

"But may I take them with me now?" he asked, hesitatingly—"I'll bring you the bill by and bye."

"To be sure," I said—fairly smiling out at the idea of the bill, but not venturing to refuse it.

Accordingly, he took away his two favourites under his arm; evidently delighted to have them once again in his possession; for

he had more regard for them than for all his writings put together.

The next day he brought me a promissory note duly drawn—and which of course was *not* duly paid. That it was paid ultimately, I need not say. Had it been otherwise, the reader would have heard nothing of the details, at least, of this little story. About seven or eight months afterwards, when I had almost forgotten the bill he had given me, he called on me, and, holding out a ten-pound note, said—“Have you got that bill?” and I believe he never parted with a bank note so readily as he did on this occasion.

Returning for a moment to our visit to John Hunt, in Coldbath Fields Prison, I remember, as if it had happened but yesterday, the precise spot on which we met him in the prison garden; the dreary and prison-like look of the garden itself, without a tree or a shrub in it; with nothing alive but long rows of sickly cabbages and lettuces, that seemed to be pining for the free air that passed hundreds of feet above their heads—an “unreal mockery” of a garden—

that seemed, to a true garden, what the melancholy "liberty" of walking in it was to liberty itself. I remember, too, the extreme cleanliness of the narrow and interminable passages through which we passed to the prisoner's cell, and that it struck me as something shocking—like the unnatural tameness of the birds and animals in the island of Juan Fernandez—a species of refinement in cruelty. The cell itself, too, I see before me as I write—with its lofty ceiling, which made the area look twice as small as it really was ; its square iron-barred window, on the right-hand wall as you entered, raised out of the reach of any access either from within or without ; the little blank fire-place opposite to the door ; and the no-furniture, consisting of a table and two chairs. Being an optimist, I have often thought since that the statesmen of that day were the people of all others to inculcate the blessings and the love of political liberty. To imprison for two years in a place like this one of the most honest, honourable, and pure-minded *men* [†] ever lived, for expressing a *politi*
they did not approve, *was* :

of making him a patriot and an advocate of freedom, if he had not been so before. There is nothing like Evil for teaching the value and the virtue of Good—nothing like Wrong for demonstrating and confirming Right.

XIX.

HAZLITT'S PERSONAL OPINIONS AND CRITICAL ESTIMATES OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.—LEIGH HUNT.

It often used to occasion me no less surprise than regret to find that Hazlitt did not duly appreciate the genius and writings of Mr. Leigh Hunt; or rather let me confine the remark to Mr. Hunt's *writings*; for his genius and talents were not underrated by Hazlitt. That their results were sometimes disparaged, or their merits overlooked, is to be attributed to various causes, arising out of the personal character of the two men, and their intimacy with each other. If Hazlitt had not been in habits of personal intercourse with Hunt, he would have estimated his literary efforts justly. But, with Hazlitt, "to know a man truly, was to know *himself*;" and therefore *not* to know that which is but an offset and emanation from him. Probably no man ever formed a just critical estimate of the writings of his personal intimates is scarcely possible to do

contemporary, though he may be personally unknown to us. There never was a more just and enlightened critical spirit abroad than that which prevails in the present day. Yet not one of our estimates of contemporary genius will be exactly confirmed by posterity—which is the only final and infallible judge in such matters. But for a man to estimate the literary character of his personal intimate, or his personal enemy, is not in human nature. He might almost as reasonably hope to estimate his own. And yet we are apt to think we know more about our friends—not to mention ourselves—than strangers can possibly do. And so, perhaps, we do. We know too much, and therefore do not know any part accurately, still less the whole—which, to be seen and measured justly, must be seen at a certain distance, and *as a whole*.

Hazlitt saw in Mr. Leigh Hunt's writings—and saw with an almost preternatural acuteness of vision—what we have no right to see at all, and what none but his personal intimates do or can see—the secret workings and results of those personal feelings (call them failings if you please—their owner is

too wise as well as too liberal in his self-knowledge to be offended at the phrase) which more or less beset and modify the mental operations of every deep and original thinker, and still more of one (as in the instance before us) whose personal feelings blend with and give colour to all his meditations.

At a very early period of Mr. Leigh Hunt's literary career, his remarkable social qualities had gathered round him a coterie of that class of admirers who are too apt to take the form of adulators, and who, in this latter phase of their character, are not merely inclined, but impelled, to overlook the loftier qualities and attributes of their idol, in order to monster his smaller merits, or metamorphose his errors and short-comings into beauties and virtues.

The consequence for a time was, that the young and happily-constituted writer

"To *persons* gave up what was meant for mankind ;"

never wholly deserting or misusing his high calling, but not seldom postponing its duties to the delights of social success and individual admiration ; confiding (as every man

of genius is impelled and bound to do) in his own judgment and his own consciousness, as to the uses and applications of those fine qualities and capacities of his mind which his adulators failed to see or to comprehend; but believing in and abiding by *them* in all the rest.*

This state of things—a happy one perhaps for him whom they touched most nearly, but a sad one for those who already looked to him for the due exercise of his high and rare powers of affording mingled instruction and delight to his fellow-creatures—has long since given place to one more consonant to the nature and tendency of those powers, and their just claims to the distinctions which they confer on their possessor; and I only recur to it now to account for the insufficient impression which Hazlitt entertained of the writings of Mr. Hunt, and their future influence on the moral and intellectual character of the age. Hazlitt saw and grieved at the state of things I

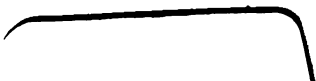
* I gather these details and impressions from Hazlitt. I had not the pleasure of Mr. Leigh Hunt's acquaintance at the time referred to.

have described ; then grew vexed and angry at it ; (these latter feelings being not wholly unmixed, I am afraid, with a touch of personal envy at the “earthlier happy” condition of his friend as compared with his own) ; till at last his personal feelings blended and interfered with all his impressions respecting the writings of his friend and fellow-labourer, and gave to his judgment that sinister bias which it was so apt to take, or rather so incapable of escaping, on all questions of contemporary merit and distinction.

It is true that Hazlitt has in numerous instances, and in various quarters, used the influence of his pen and his critical powers to disseminate opinions, just, as far as they go, respecting the literary pretensions of this delightful and accomplished writer. He, perhaps, did more for Mr. Hunt’s reputation in this respect than any other writer of his day. But, besides having done this more as a set-off against the gratuitous calumnies of his enemies and maligners than as a spontaneous tribute to the merits of the man, he has fallen miserably short, as I conceive, of conveying a clear and full impression of Mr.

Hunt's intellectual pretensions, and still more so in estimating the actual, and anticipating the future, results of those pretensions upon the social character and condition of this country.

But it will, I fear, be felt that I am transgressing the true limits of my design. Returning to more purely personal matters, I may say, that though Hazlitt took great pleasure in Mr. Hunt's society, it was not the kind of social intercourse he best liked. It was one in which each party sought to shine in the eyes of each other, or of the persons present, if any. And though this desire is perhaps more successful in producing the power and the result it aims at than any other means, yet to *shine* in conversation is not to *enjoy* it; to talk brilliantly, or to hear brilliant talk, is not to talk or to listen with the heart; it includes and supposes none of that effusion of individual feeling, and that exercise and interchange of human sympathy—none of that “flow of soul” in the absence of which, talk (be it even that of the brightest wits and choicest spirits of the time) is but “as a tinkling cymbal,” or as



the tittle-tattle of club-compelled exquisites and tea-drinking Abigails.

How delightful is the kind of talk I have alluded to! It is, of all intellectual enjoyments, at once the most perfect and the most ennobling; because it is of all others the least impaired by those debasing contradictions and weaknesses which blend more or less with all our pleasures—even with this—and cloud their brightness, while they weaken their force and fullness. This welling forth of the springs of affection and of passion in the human heart has always seemed to me precisely analogous to the singing of birds; a spontaneous and involuntary effusion from the hidden and mysterious sources of delight; rising in beauty and in melody with the character of its utterer, from the poor twittering of the sparrow on the house-top, to the intense and passionate warbling of the nightingale in the deep recesses of a solemn wood at midnight; but in each case created, called forth, and modified by something external from its source; sinking into and growing out of that, as the waves in water, or the sounds of a wind-swept lute; and in no case to be

thoroughly enjoyed except (as with the birds) between co-mates in kindness and in love. When the nightingale, in the antique story, sought to rival the music of the human minstrel, she put forth miracles of bright sounds, but her heart burst in the unnatural struggle. And thus it is with us "human mortals." One man may rouse and stir an assembled nation by his eloquence ; another may teach a great multitude by his knowledge ; a third may "keep the table in a roar" by his wit ; a fourth may lap his hearers in Elysium by his fancy or imagination ; and so forth. But there is no real enjoyment of talk except in a *tête-à-tête* between friends or lovers ; no free pouring forth of the feelings and affections that make up our intellectual being, except where there exists that frank interchange of sympathy which prompts us to listen with as eager an interest as we feel in speaking, and which at the same time satisfies us that *we*, in our turn, are listened to with a corresponding pleasure.

XX.

HAZLITT'S PERSONAL OPINIONS AND CRITICAL ESTIMATES OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.—WALTER SCOTT.

IF there was any general subject on which the critical opinions of Hazlitt were to be distrusted, it was that of the merits and defects of his distinguished contemporaries in literature and art. In fact, most of what he had to say on these topics was so moulded and modified by the personal feelings and prejudices engendered by his early associations, and by the position in which those placed him in reference to the rest of the world, that they scarcely deserved the name of *deliberate* opinions. During the latter years of his life Hazlitt laboured under a total incapacity of reading any work, however brief, consecutively and completely. He had spent, he used to say, the first half of his life in doing nothing but read; and it was hard if he might not employ the remainder in turning his reading to account. He

used to say, too, that after he began to write, reading became a task instead of an enjoyment; and he never pretended to do anything voluntarily but what it pleased him to do.

This was all very well for a man of leisure, and competence to afford that leisure; but it was an awkward propensity for one to indulge in who undertook to review the writings of those who did not begin to write till their reviewer had left off reading.

I do not believe Hazlitt ever read the half of any one work that he reviewed—not even the Scotch novels, of which he read more than of any other modern productions, and has written better, perhaps, than any other of their critics. I am certain that of many works that he has reviewed, and of many writers whose general pretensions he has estimated better than anybody else has done, he never read one tithe; and even what he did read was not the most characteristic portion, or that best calculated to afford ground for a fortunate guess. No wonder then that his “Spirit of the Age” should be disfigured by such a copious mixture of false criticism and personal prejudice. But then, on the

other hand, where else is to be found, in the same space and on a similar subject, such an amount of happy illustration, sound criticism, and searching truth.

The fact is that Hazlitt's half-random guesses, founded on a furtive and momentary glance, went nearer to the pith of the matter in question, whatever it might be, than the elaborate and lengthened examinations of ordinary men. And in this respect there was a remarkable conformity between his mental and his bodily perceptions. He never fairly *looked* at anybody; and yet, having once seen a person, he not only never forgot them afterwards, but could describe them to others with all the effect of an actual picture, and could trace "the mind's observance in the face" with a sagacity almost superhuman. I never knew him mistaken even in his physiognomical *guesses*, much less in his deliberate estimates,—on which, by the bye, if on anything, he especially piqued himself. "I am infallible (I have heard him say) in reading a face."

The only one among his contemporaries with whose writings Hazlitt was re-

quainted was Sir Walter Scott; and for him he felt a degree of admiration as a writer, that, so far from being equalled, was scarcely shared, even in kind, by that called forth in the case of any other writer of the present or the last age. Indeed Scott only needed to have been born a hundred years ago to have held, in Hazlitt's estimation, a rank second only to that of Shakspeare; for in that case he would not have been compelled to mix up with his feelings of love and admiration those counteracting ones arising out of Scott's politics, and their results upon his position in society. He would only then have seen in him what the world will see a hundred years hence—a Shakspeare in the universality of his sympathies with human nature and human life, though not in the profounder points of his poetry and his philosophy. As it was, Hazlitt saw what there was for love and admiration, but he saw it in the pet of the Tories, the patron of Blackwood's and the Beacon, the upholder of the divine right of kings, the disparaging biographer of Napoleon, and ("though last, not least in his dear *hate*") the Scotchman.

There was something singularly interesting, and even affecting, in the perpetual struggle which took place in Hazlitt's mind on the subject of this great man—who was now scarcely below a divinity, and the next hour almost a shame and a blot upon humanity, according to the view from which he was contemplated; now drawing all human hearts together in one bond of mutual sympathy—now trampling upon the best feelings and affections of them all for the imaginary benefit and aggrandisement of one, or half-a-dozen!—squandering the “birth-right” of the human race for the miserable “mess of pottage” that was to keep alive for a little longer the bedridden dotage of “divine right” and “legitimate” authority!

True it is that Scott did not

“To party give up what was meant for mankind;”

he did but give up the tithe to his party, devoting the great body of the harvest of his intellect to the instruction, delight, and benefit of the whole human race; nay, putting forth as beautiful and subtle an effort of his genius to vindicate the right of a poor

fish-wife to enjoy her dram as ever he did to make good the title of a legitimate monarch to his throne. Yet Hazlitt hated him for reserving that tithe almost as much as if he had bestowed the whole. But he did this on the principle, that a single ill word from a wise and good man does more to injure a character or a cause, than a whole volume from the pen or the lips of a knave.

XXI.

HIS OPINIONS OF BYRON AND MOORE.—HOW FORMED
AND MODIFIED.

WITH the exception of those living writers, and, indeed, of those particular passages in their works which touched him privately and individually, Hazlitt scarcely ever referred to a contemporary work unless as a matter of business, or opened its pages except as a task; and of no one of those writers, except Scott, had he (as I have said) read a tithe of their productions. Yet he has written elaborate critical estimates of about twenty of the most distinguished, in his "Spirit of the Age." And if you take those estimates only for what they are worth, and with that degree of qualification with which *all* his critical writings must be taken, it will be found that they are, at the very least, as complete and satisfactory as any others that are to be met with elsewhere, touching the same writers.

But the truth is, that in no case whatever could Hazlitt's estimates of *persons* be taken implicitly; because it was impossible for him to prevent—and he never for a moment tried to prevent—his own intense personal feelings from blending with and giving a colour to such estimates. And of *living* persons—of those who came, as it were, into hourly intellectual contact with him, by breathing the same air and treading on the same earth—he could not even form, much less set forth, a fair and unbiassed opinion. What I have to say, therefore, as to his personal opinions of his contemporaries is offered purely for what it is worth, and as illustrative of his own personal character, not of theirs—as a thing curious and interesting to know, but not to be brought against the reputations to which it refers, as a set-off from the just award they have received at the hands of the most enlightened public opinion that any age has boasted within the compass of human annals—at least in literary matters.

Having, in justice to others no less than to Hazlitt himself, premised thus much, I shall state a few of his personal opinions, or rather

feelings, about the most conspicuous among his contemporaries, whether personal acquaintances of his own or not; and this without inquiring how far those opinions may agree with or differ from his published ones on the same subject respectively.

Hazlitt looked upon Lord Byron as—a lord!—a clever and accomplished one—but nothing more. He considered that Byron occupied the throne of Poetry by the same sort of “divine right” by which “legitimate” kings occupy *their* thrones. His poetry he regarded, for the most part, as a sort of exaggerated common-place—the result of a mixture of personal anger and egotism, powerful and effective only from the excess of *passion* it embodied—of passion in the vulgar sense of that word. He was “in a passion” with himself, and with everything, and everybody about him; and being under no personal or moral restraints of any kind, the exhibition of this emotion became sufficiently striking and interesting to amount to the poetical.

I remember having occasionally pl
whist with a person who, on any

of extraordinary ill-luck, used to lay his cards down deliberately, and bite a piece out of the back of his hand! This person was, under ordinary circumstances, the very ideal of a "gentleman"—bland, polished, courteous, forbearing, kind, and self-possessed to an extraordinary degree; and his personal appearance in every respect corresponded with his manners and bearing; so that the occasional exhibitions of passion that I have alluded to were perfectly awful. Hazlitt's own passions sometimes produced similar results. I have seen him more than once, at the Fives Court in St. Martin's Street, on making a bad stroke or missing his ball at some critical point of the game, fling his racket to the other end of the court, walk deliberately to the centre, with uplifted hands imprecate the most fearful curses on his head for his stupidity, and then rush to the side wall and literally dash his head against it! The sight in both these cases was terrific; but, then, *anybody could have produced it* by using the same bodily action.

Now, Hazlitt seemed to think that Lord Byron's poetry was something on a par with

these merely physical exhibitions of bodily passion. He was in one habitual passion—with his poverty, with his lameness, with his loss of caste in society, and, above all, with the Edinburgh Review, for having told him the truth about his boyish verses; and, accordingly, his whole life and conversation were one continuous “unpacking of his heart with words,” for want of daring or being able to use sharper weapons against himself and his fellow-beings. *Anybody might have written his poetry* (so Hazlitt thought and said) if they could only have worked themselves up to an equal amount of personal rage and hatred against himself and all mankind.

Such was Hazlitt’s general opinion of Byron; and there is no denying that it is true of a certain part of his poetry—of the bad part of it—in other words, of that part which is not poetry at all;—of the blasphemy, the profligacy, the indecency, the utter and elaborate wickedness, the “malice prepense” against all the human race,—all of which are so painfully conspicuous in almost every part of that shame and scandal of the age—“Don Juan.” And it is not very

far from the truth of much of that portion of his works which embody (however blended with other things) his own individual character. But it is scarcely needful to say how utterly false and unfair it is when applied to his poetry as a general proposition—how ridiculously inapplicable it is to the lofty grandeur and severe beauty of his Tragedies (hitherto wholly unappreciated); to the profound and subtle philosophy, and the burning passion (using the word in its poetical sense), of the “Manfred;” to the sublime imaginations and beatific visions of many parts of the supernatural Dramas; to the unequalled descriptions and imagery of the “Childe Harold;” to the soul-melting pathos and perfect purity of the “Stanzas to Thirza,” the “Dream,” &c. It is in virtue of these, and in spite of the mere personal egotism and vulgar malice of much of his writings, that Byron enjoys and deserves his high reputation, and will continue to enjoy it while Milton and Shakspeare maintain theirs.

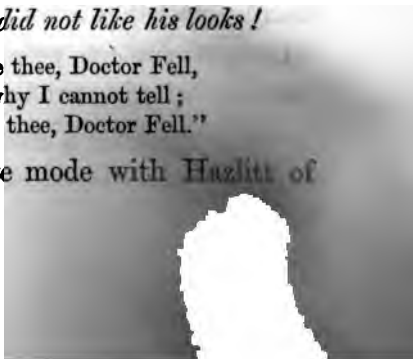
XXII.

HIS OPINIONS OF CONTEMPORARIES (*continued*).—
SHELLEY AND MOORE.—HIS CONNEXION WITH THE
“LIBERAL.”

To the powers of Shelley, and to their poetical results, Hazlitt did as little justice as to those of Byron. And in this instance I could never very clearly account to myself for the personal cause of his dislike,—which in every other similar instance there was no difficulty in doing. Scott was a Tory;—Byron was a lord;—and it will be seen hereafter, that in the various other cases in which he withheld the due meed of honour from his distinguished contemporaries, there was some personal feeling or other capable of explaining, if not of excusing, the injustice. But in the case of Shelley, I could never make out any better reason than that *he had seen him and did not like his looks!*

“I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
I do not like thee, Doctor Fell.”

This was a favourite mode with Hazlitt of



forming his personal opinions; and one which, in his case, was not a very dangerous one, on account of his intuitive skill in reading "the mind's observance in the face." But there can be no doubt that in this instance he grossly and strangely deceived himself. If ever any human being was gifted with "the vision and the faculty *divine*," Shelley was so gifted. Yet all that Hazlitt chose to see in him were certain supposed corollaries from his personal appearance and physical conformation. Shelley's figure was tall and almost unnaturally attenuated, so as to bend to the earth like a plant that has been deprived of its vital air; his features had an unnatural sharpness, and an unhealthy paleness, like a flower that has been kept from the light of day; his eyes had an almost superhuman brightness, and his voice a preternatural elevation of pitch and a shrillness of tone;—all which peculiarities probably arose from some accidental circumstances connected with his early nurture and bringing up.* But all these Hazlitt

* This description is Hazlitt's, not mine: I never saw Shelley.

tortured into external types and symbols of that unnatural and unwholesome craving after injurious excitement, that morbid tendency towards interdicted topics and questions of moral good and evil, and that forbidden search into the secrets of our nature and ultimate destiny, into which he strangely and inconsequentially resolved the whole of Shelley's productions. His vast and vivid insight into the possible future, as springing out of and moulded by the present and the past; his gorgeous and glowing imagination; his universal philanthropy—the patriotism of one whose all-embracing spirit could know no country but the world; his daring yet devout faith in good, as the necessary offspring and end of evil; his intense sympathy with all natural beauty, as the living type, the visible image, of that which is intellectual; his wonderful affluence and pomp of language,—altogether unrivalled by any other writer, ancient or modern :—all these Hazlitt seemed to overlook in Shelley.

There is but one intelligible explanation of this; and it is that, in fact, Hazlitt

little or nothing of all the various poetical wealth to which I have referred. And such I believe to have been the case; for though I have often heard him speak disparagingly of Shelley as a poet, I never heard him refer to a single line or passage of his published writings.

For Hazlitt's dislike and disparagement of the author of "*Lalla Rookh*," there is not much difficulty in accounting. He (Moore) was understood to have discouraged, and ultimately broken off, Lord Byron's connexion with Leigh Hunt and Hazlitt in "*The Liberal*;" an undertaking which, had it been cordially taken up by Byron and his friends, might, Hazlitt thought, have produced great results. Hazlitt attributed the strangling in its birth of this promising offspring of the new Spirit of the Age to the personal envy, and consequent ill-offices, of Moore—and he never forgave him—though much more, I believe, from a public than a private and personal feeling on the matter.

But what Hazlitt could forgive less was an insulting reference which Moore has made (in his "*Rhymes on the Road*") to one of Hazlitt's intellectual idols, Rousseau, who,

with the heroine of the "Confessions," Madame de Warens, he (Moore) calls "low people." Referring to "*Les Charmettes*," he says of its former celebrated inhabitants :

"And doubtless 'mong the grave and good,
And gentle* of their neighbourhood,
If known at all, they were but known
As strange, low people, low and bad,
Madame herself to footmen prone,
And her young *pauper* all but mad."

This outrage upon Hazlitt's early associations was more than he could bear. It drove him "all but mad ;" and he never after lost an opportunity, public or private, of venting his indignation against the perpetrator of it. Nor would it be easy to repel the cannonade of argument and invective by which he sought to demonstrate that it *was* an outrage, no less against fact and justice than against feeling and common honesty.†

I must not refrain from adding my belief, that Hazlitt's indignation, though not engendered, was in some degree heightened, by

* Meaning well-born.

† Particularly in his *Essay in the*
on "The Spleen of Party."

his Rousseau-like suspicion that the poet's sneer at Rousseau *was partly intended to point at himself*—a suspicion not wholly without plausible grounds at the time, considering that he was convinced (whether justly or not I have no means of knowing) that his (Hazlitt's) connexion with "The Liberal" had just been dissolved by the remonstrances of Moore, *on the very grounds urged against Rousseau*, namely, that it was "discreditable" to his "noble" friend to have to do with people who were so "poor" as to make the connexion desirable to them in a pecuniary point of view; so "low" as to lodge in a second floor; and so "bad" as to have been seen speaking to "improper" females by the light of the gas-lamps.

XXIII.

HIS CONTEMPORARIES (*continued*).—COLERIDGE,
SOUTHEY, AND WORDSWORTH.

It is very painful to me to put on record the personal opinions and feelings of Hazlitt respecting his early friends and associates, Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth, particularly the two latter, men from whose writings I have received more delight and instruction than from those of any other two living men, or indeed from all others united, Hazlitt alone excepted; men also for whose personal characters I have ever cherished a degree of respect amounting to reverence. But I must not shrink from my purpose nevertheless. And I need not fear that its execution will in the smallest degree affect either the literary or the personal estimation of the distinguished men to whom it refers, even in the eyes of those who are disposed to treat Hazlitt's decisions as oracles; because the reasons for the disparaging opinions I :

to record of them will accompany and explain those opinions, and throw the odium of them (if any there be) where it really ought to rest.

But my task is not the less painful on this account, but rather the more so, since its faithful execution must necessarily expose the miserable weaknesses and errors of a man of whose intellectual powers I thought no less highly than I do of the men they were employed to disparage, and with a view to the redemption of whose personal character from the unmerited odium which has been heaped upon it, these pages have partly if not chiefly been written.

The truth is that, in the case of Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth alone, Hazlitt seemed to have wilfully repudiated that guiding and pervading spirit of his personal character, the love of truth and justice for themselves alone. And what made the matter in appearance worse was, that he had seemed to do this from a personal feeling alone; so, at least, the case was represented by those who made it part of the business of their lives to *misrepresent* the motives, feel-

ings, and actions of this much-maligned and ill-appreciated man. Many extravagant and ridiculous stories were related, or rather whispered about vaguely, all of them more or less discreditable to the personal character of Hazlitt, as the *immediate* cause of his alienation from the distinguished friends of his early life: and in the most discreditable of them all there was, I have been led to believe, some truth. I allude to a story relating to Hazlitt's alleged treatment of some pretty village jilt, who, when he was on a visit to Wordsworth, had led him (Hazlitt) to believe that she was not insensible to his attentions; and then, having induced him to "commit" himself to her in some ridiculous manner, turned round upon him, and made him the laughing-stock of the village. There is, I believe, too much truth in the statement of his enemies, that the mingled disappointment and rage of Hazlitt on this occasion led him, during the madness of the moment (for it **must have** been nothing less), to acts which nothing but the supposition of insanity could account for, much less excuse. And his conduct on this occasion is understood to have been the

immediate cause of that breach between him and his friends above-named (at least Wordsworth and Southey), which was never afterwards healed.

But I am bound to declare that their treatment of him on this occasion was *not* the cause of his subsequent feelings towards these distinguished men, or of his treatment of them as arising out of those feelings. It was not the petty anger arising out of a sense of some trifling personal injustice (even if he entertained any such feeling, which he scarcely could in the case in question), that could make Hazlitt either blindly insensible to the claims of such men as Wordsworth and Southey, or wilfully unjust to those claims, whether personal or intellectual.

But there was *one* offence—call it a crime—for such it was in his estimation—which could make him both blindly insensible and almost deliberately unjust to the claims, whatever they might be, of those whom he deemed guilty of it. He felt an almost boundless sympathy with the weaknesses of our nature, and an equally unlimited toleration for almost all their natural re-

sults. But there was one of those results for which, believing it to be in some *unnatural*, he entertained a hatred that can scarcely be conceived by those who have not been accustomed to witness and watch the consequences of violent passions, when habituated from earliest youth to work their own will, without a touch of restraint or self-assistance. Against the man who could steal from his fellow-man to preserve his own life, or even to gratify his passing desires, Hazlitt could feel little, if any, of that anger and resentment which honest men are expected; and for the most part accustomed, to look upon almost as one of their social duties. But against the man who could deliberately set himself to assist in robbing THE HUMAN RACE of its birthright, merely in consideration of the "mess of pottage" that *he* was to get for his pains—against the individual who could (reversing the deed of the immortal Roman) plunge his country into the gulf to preserve or benefit himself—in a word, against the political apostate Hazlitt cherished a hatred so bitter as intense, that it blended with the very spr

of his life, and coloured every movement and affection of his mind. And such men he considered Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth to have been, when they deserted the principles of the French Revolution, and set themselves, heart and soul, to oppose its "child and champion," Napoleon Buonaparte. But when they showed themselves (as the two former did in an especial manner) the most powerful, persevering, and effective of all the literary opponents of that idol of Hazlitt's hopes and admiration, his anger and resentment against them amounted to a degree of rage, that made him reckless of all justice, and of all consequences—a fanaticism of hatred, which can only be compared to, and has, perhaps, only been paralleled by, that *odium theologicum* which has at intervals desolated the nations with flame and bloodshed, in behalf of a religion of peace.

In Coleridge,—on whom, from the very dawning of his intellectual faculties, Hazlitt had been accustomed to look almost as the heaven-appointed apostle of human liberty, sent forth to preach its doctrines and pro-

mulgate its beauties and virtues in words of more than mortal eloquence,—he suddenly beheld the Pitt-appointed editor of the “Morning Post” newspaper—the writer of daily diatribes, which not merely advocated and advised, but at last actually caused and created,* that Tory crusade against freedom which ultimately consigned it to twenty years more of outrage and violence, and ended by debauching and debasing its noblest champion into its deadliest foe.

This was bad enough for Hazlitt: though the peculiar character of Coleridge’s intellect, and the “transcendental” changes to which it was liable, might have prepared him for the possibility at least of something of this kind,—especially when it is borne in mind that Coleridge had already abandoned (on a point of conscience) the profession to which he had been bred—the church,—and had no means but his pen of escaping from absolute

* Such, at least, was the deliberate opinion of one of the greatest statesmen of his day, Charles Fox, who declared in his place in the House of Commons, that the war against France had been caused by the “Morning Post,”—the dictum being exclusively ascribed to Coleridge’s writings there.

destitution. But when Hazlitt saw the severe, the single-hearted, the simple-minded Southey—a man whose almost ascetic habits preserved him from the possibility of want, and, on the other hand, whose varied and available talents and acquirements, and his singular industry, gave him the certain means of satisfying wants tenfold beyond any that he could even comprehend as such—when he saw this man suddenly, from the minstrel of Joan of Arc and the immortaliser of Wat Tyler, emerge into the most fertile, the most ingenious, the most persevering, and the most efficient of all the literary supporters, advocates, and apologists (as the case might be) of those recognised abuses on which corrupt power at that time rested its sole hope of continuance and perpetuation; in short, when he beheld, in the late fanatic to liberty, the furious denouncer of Reformers as “worse than housebreakers,”—when he saw the late scorner of all Kings, and despiser and maligner of Courts, changed into the special-pleading advocate of divine right and legitimacy, the bower-down at levees, and the poet laureate and panegyrist

of George the Fourth, it half unseated his reason, and rendered him, on these topics, scarcely accountable for what he wrote or said.

But it must be especially stated, that even under these circumstances, and inflamed as he was against Southey with a feeling of something like personal revenge, for his desertion of a cause, for *his* (Hazlitt's) consistent devotion to which he was suffering a daily martyrdom of mingled obloquy and privation, he never once, to the best of my recollection, either in print or otherwise, treated Southey as a dishonest man, but only as a weak, a vain, a self-willed, and a mistaken one. He sometimes wrote and oftener spoke of Southey with a degree of contempt and disparagement that amounted to the ridiculous, when compared with his great natural powers, his noble acquirements, and the vast literary results which have proceeded from them. But if pressed (though not otherwise I confess) he admitted a saving clause in favour of his sincerity and love of truth. Whereas, in the case of Coleridge, his feelings carried him to the opposite ex-

treme; for while he exaggerated his estimate of the intellectual powers of that extraordinary man to an almost superhuman pitch, he treated the chief public uses which he made of those powers as the results of the most shameless hypocrisy and the most despicable cant.

With respect to Wordsworth, Hazlitt's estimate of him, both as a writer and a man, was much nearer to the truth than in either of the other two cases; for the worst that Wordsworth had done in the way of political apostacy was, to accept an obligation from a party he despised, and thus cut himself off from the will as well as the power to use his pen against them. He never used it *for* that party; nor did Hazlitt accuse him of having ever gone a single step from the pure, even, and dignified tenor of his way, either to gain or to keep the good that he chose to accept from evil hands. On the contrary, the worst that Hazlitt had to say of Wordsworth was, that he was a poet and nothing more; meaning thereby that he was incapable of taking any personal interest in the

actual wants, desires, enjoyments, sufferings, and sentiments of his fellow-men; and that, so long as he could be permitted to wander in peace and personal comfort among his favourite scenes of external nature, and chant his lyrical ballads to an admiring friend, and make his lonely excursions into the mystic realms of imagination, and enjoy unmolested the moods of his own mind, the human race and its rights and interests might lie bound for ever to the footstools of kings, or be half exterminated in seeking to escape thence, for anything that he cared, or any step that he would take to the contrary,—unless it were to write an ode or a sonnet on the question, and keep it in his desk till the point had settled itself. In short, Hazlitt seemed to look upon Wordsworth as a man purged and etherealised, by his mental constitution and habits, from all the everyday interests and sentiments with which ordinary men regard their fellow-*men*, and incognizant of any claims upon his human nature but such as have reference to *man* in the abstract; and that, while he could secure leisure to

dream and dogmatise and poetise on this latter theme, the living world and its ways were matters wholly beneath his notice.

The pertinacity with which Hazlitt used to insist on this pretended *selfism* of Wordsworth—this alleged repudiation, and even hatred, of all interests and sympathies external from those engendered by his own contemplation of his own mind,—and the malicious pleasure with which he used to dwell on and recur to anecdotes which he deemed illustrative of this characteristic, were very remarkable. One anecdote, in particular, I remember to have heard him repeat many times, and always with a feeling of bitterness and *acharnement* which was evidently the result of a strong and cherished personal dislike. It merely related to some disparaging observation which Wordsworth was said to have made (for Hazlitt did not pretend to have heard it himself—so that the whole story was probably a fabrication or a blunder of the relator) on somebody's admiring and pointing Wordsworth's attention to a **cast** from some beautiful Greek statue in Haydon's painting-room;—the ridiculous and

wholly gratuitous inference being, that Wordsworth hated to look on anything beautiful or admirable that did not bear the impress of his own mind, and that he desired everybody else should do the same;—in short, that he hated everything in the world but his own poetry, and that he never enjoyed a moment of personal satisfaction but when he was (as Hazlitt used disparagingly to phrase it) “mouthing it out” to the gaping ears of ignorant worshippers, and fancying that all the human race would soon be doing the same.

It may seem something more than superfluous—almost impertinent—for me to deprecate the idea that my own impressions regarding the illustrious man above-named were in the smallest degree affected by what I have now related. But I cannot help doing so nevertheless. Had my debt of personal gratitude to Wordsworth as a poet been less deep than it is, I might perhaps have been in some degree influenced by Hazlitt’s disparaging notions of him as a man; for I knew nothing of Wordsworth myself; and we are but too apt to take

malicious pleasure in seeing reduced nearer to our own level the general character of those whom we admit to soar above us in some particular. Even had Wordsworth been only the *greatest* of modern poets, I might perhaps have yielded my belief to Hazlitt's pertinacious exhibitions of him as anything but great as a man. But, happily, the beauty, the charm, and the virtue of Wordsworth's poetry is, that it for the most part affects the reason as a personal thing—that it touches us as if it were a matter between the poet and ourselves, and thus engenders a feeling little, if at all, differing in spirit and effect from that individual gratitude which even the worst of mankind are proud and pleased to owe and to pay, in return for personal benefits and obligations. Almost all other poets may be appreciated and enjoyed without any other benefit than that appreciation and enjoyment; but it is impossible to appreciate and enjoy Wordsworth without being wiser, better, and happier after the enjoyment has ceased. And the man who makes us permanently happier than we could have been without his aid, has our personal gra-

titude as much as if he had effected the object by a personal boon. The man whom Wordsworth's poetry has lifted from the debasement and despondency of spirit in which it may have found him, and endowed him with the "riches fineless" of a heart and mind capable of creating their own wealth by the happy alchemy of a purified and purifying imagination (and there are many such men living), feels himself as much bound to the poet by personal ties of gratitude and love, as if he had lifted him from actual poverty, and given him the means of worldly competence and comfort. And that the poet who has done this in innumerable instances could be the man Hazlitt believed and sought to represent Wordsworth, is not to be conceived on any recognised principle of the human mind, or any experience that we possess of its qualities and operations.

Moreover, I do not recollect a single instance in which Hazlitt's depreciating stories of Wordsworth were drawn from his own personal experience. They were founded on the mere idle or malicious gossip of people who could see nothing in Wordsworth but

his reputation, and who gathered their notions of that from the early pages of the Edinburgh Review; and they were turned by Hazlitt's perverse ingenuity, to those self-tormenting purposes to which he was so prone, whenever his personal feelings took part against his better knowledge and judgment.

XXIV.

HIS CONTEMPORARIES (*continued*).—SIR LYPTON
BULWER AND WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

THE writings of Bulwer had not attracted Hazlitt's attention till just before his death. As I have said before, he never read a line of any living writer, except when called upon to do so as a matter of business—either with a view to an article in the Edinburgh Review, or when a new work was sent to him to criticise for any other periodical. At last, on my repeatedly urging to him do so, he read "Paul Clifford," and he thought so highly of it, that he at once made up his mind to read all Bulwer's novels, with the intention of discussing their merits in the Edinburgh Review. And I believe he wrote to Mr. Jeffrey proposing the subject—as he always did in similar cases before going to work.

So the matter rested for some time—~~Haz-~~
litt, in the interim, often expressi

anxiety to get "the job," as he called it—if it were only that he might have a sufficiently strong inducement to read the works of which "Paul Clifford" had given him so attractive a foretaste. Shortly after this period, Mr. Jeffrey retired from the ostensible management of the *Edinburgh Review*—which was confided to Mr. Macvey Napier; and on that gentleman visiting town, Hazlitt proposed to him personally the subject of Bulwer's novels. I saw him immediately after he had spoken to Mr. Napier on this matter; and I found that there was a *hitch* somewhere; though in what particular point of literary, personal, or political demerit on the part of Bulwer the difficulty turned, Hazlitt could never learn. Certain it is, however, that Hazlitt anxiously desired to write the review in question; that he expressly proposed it to Mr. Napier (as I believe he had done to Mr. Jeffrey before—though of this I am not quite certain), and that it was positively and finally refused—the *subject* being an interdicted one.

The literary public must draw their own conclusions from this little fact in the secret

history of one of our great critical tribunals. I cannot help them to any further means of arriving at the solution of the mystery ; nor should I have thought of making any allusion to it here, had it not proved what may be satisfactory to the numerous admirers of Bulwer as a novelist—namely, that even the perusal of one only of his works conveyed a due impression of his powers to the greatest critic of the day. Hazlitt also stated to me, on this curious point of literary history, that in his interview with Mr. Napier, that gentleman had mentioned to him that Mr. Campbell had more than once pointed Mr. Jeffrey's attention to Bulwer's novels, as a fit subject for a conspicuous notice in the Review, but that the same obstacle (whatever it was) had existed at that time.

Of Walter Savage Landor, Hazlitt entertained a very high opinion, even before the production of his noble work, the "Imaginary Conversations ;" but Mr. Landor's intimate connexion and friendship with Southey created that personal feeling about him in Hazlitt's mind which always prevented his judgment from forming an unbiassed decision. That

the fierce republican, and the poet of the "Vision of Judgment," should be able to set their horses together, seemed to throw a doubt on the sincerity, as well as the stability, of the opinions of both. On the appearance, however, of the "Imaginary Conversations," Hazlitt lost all doubt of Landor's sincerity and political honesty, and attributed the contradiction in question to one of those crotchets of the brain with which genius is so apt to be haunted. The book was one after his own heart; and some parts of it he considered finer than anything else from a modern pen. There were, however, many parts which he looked upon as pure raving, and others which seemed as if they were put forth in that spirit of arrogant and insolent assumption of superiority over all the rest of the world, past and present, which was peculiarly obnoxious to Hazlitt's essentially diffident nature. He did not think that the fate of a nation was to be settled by a phrase, or the character of a whole people predicated in the stroke of a pen. Not that he had any respect for a name. But he hesitated to set aside the award of a whole generation; and for that of

ages he entertained what might almost have been deemed a superstitious reverence, but that it was founded on deep and accurate observation of the causes and qualities which lead to a national reputation. He believed, indeed, that a people is infallible in its decisions, on all questions of fact and of national feeling—of course, provided it have the fair means and materials for forming its decision; and therefore, that to dispute “Public Opinion” is to dispute an identical proposition. Prove to him, for example, that the actual government of any given state is supported by public opinion, fairly and properly so called, and his inference was that *that* was the form of government fitted for the people governed by it. And so of any other question, moral, political, or literary—any question in which the imagination and the feelings take part.

It followed that Mr. Landor’s dogmatic mode of abolishing a reputation of ages’ standing by a breath of his mouth, or creating one by the same summary] where nobody else had ever seen materials for it, did not

notions of what was just and fitting. the violent and, in some degree, unjustions of an article which he wrote "Imaginary Conversations" in the burgh Review. He was, however, swerable, he told me, for the whole article, alterations and additions having made in it after it left his hands.

Subsequently Hazlitt was personal duced to Landor, at his residence at F and he returned to England with an increased and heightened opinion of his great and with all the prejudices he had formerly entertained against his personal character almost entirely removed.

XXV.

HIS PERSONAL CONTEMPORARIES (*concluded*).—BARRY CORNWALL AND SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

AMONG his literary contemporaries there was none to whom Hazlitt did more justice than to the exquisite writer known to the reading public as Barry Cornwall. His personal intimacy with that writer commenced, I believe, almost immediately after the appearance of the “Dramatic Scenes;” and it endured, without breach, till Hazlitt’s death—a period of pretty nearly twenty years. I doubt if the same can be said of any one other of his intimacies—I mean the *unbroken* continuance of it. But there is—as in what case is there not?—between the writings of that delightful poet and his personal character a beautiful correspondence and relationship, which, to those who know him, cause them to act and react upon each other, till the result is a pervading sense of sweetness of temperament, and

ness of heart, which those petty pains and discrepancies that are so apt to disturb the current of our ordinary intercourse are incapable of suffering. To quarrel about trifles with a man who has added to our intellectual wealth to the extent that Barry Cornwall has, is difficult under any circumstances; but to do so when every feature of his poetry is reflected in his personal character is impossible; and not even Hazlitt could do it, who could quarrel upon a look, a movement, or a shadow. I have twenty times seen him *try* to do it—always by “making the meat” on which his incipient anger was to be nourished. But his efforts at self-tormenting always ended where they began—in feeling, at least, if he could not see, the error and injustice of his suspicions.

In speaking of the justice which Hazlitt rendered to the literary pretensions of Barry Cornwall, I must be understood to mean that comparative measure of it which alone he was in the habit of meting out to his contemporaries, when called upon to do so professionally as a critic, or personally when speaking of them in conversation. In re-

ferring to the characteristics of Barry Cornwall's writings, Hazlitt was not unjust or stinting in his praise. But with the *amount* of his beauties as a poet, he was as little acquainted as he was with that of any other of his contemporaries—for the simple reason, as before stated, that he had not read a twentieth part of them. What he had read he fully appreciated; but beyond that he had not only nothing to say, but he felt nothing. And this is as if one should profess to understand and appreciate Milton by reading his *Lycidas*, or Pope by his *Epistles* or his *Satires*.

Among all Hazlitt's acquaintance and friends, there was not one more tolerant and considerate towards him, or more kind and generous to the last, than was Barry Cornwall. He was among the very few—some “two or one”—to whom Hazlitt knew and felt that he might always resort, at a moment of real need or difficulty, without fear of meeting with unkindness or repulse; or, what was more obnoxious to him, that miserable modicum of remonstrance and “good advice” which people are so apt to dole.

obligato accompaniment to the strain, whose music is thus turned into the elements of discord.

For Sheridan Knowles, Hazlitt felt great personal kindness and regard. He was never more entirely at ease than in the company of that natural and happily-constituted man. They had met very early in life, and some of Hazlitt's least unhappy associations were connected with his intercourse with Knowles, who, having always felt an almost reverential admiration for Hazlitt's talents and writings, was accustomed to express what he felt in no stinted terms. They seldom met—Knowles living in Scotland up to the period of Hazlitt's death. But when the latter visited London they were a good deal together; and when Hazlitt was in Scotland, Knowles accompanied him in a short visit to the Highlands, and was his factotum in all matters and arrangements connected with a course of lectures Hazlitt delivered on Poetry, in Glasgow and elsewhere.

It was at Hazlitt's lodgings that I first met this distinguished dramatist and excellent man; and the commencement of our

acquaintance involved so characteristic a feature of Knowles's mind, that I may be excused for referring to it more particularly. On my looking in at Hazlitt's on the evening in question, he told me that Knowles was in town, and was coming to spend the evening with him; and he begged me to stay. From what Hazlitt had often said to me of Knowles, I had a great wish to see him; but it so happened that I had, not long before, written in Blackwood's Magazine a detailed criticism on "Virgilius," which I *now* feel to have been much too severe in its unfavourable parts, and of which (as I learned from Hazlitt) Knowles believed me to be the writer. I therefore reminded Hazlitt of this fact, and prepared to take my departure at once—being as little disposed, on my own account as on Knowles's, to stand the brunt of a meeting which I believed Hazlitt to have proposed in forgetfulness of the above circumstance.

But Hazlitt would not hear of my going, and agreed to take the consequences of the meeting upon himself. ~~Acco~~ I stayed, and presently Know

mediately after mentioning my name, Hazlitt alluded to the criticism in question; and I can never forget the frank, cordial, and manly manner in which Knowles treated the thing; for he took it up at once, as a stumbling-block necessary to be moved out of the way before we could make any approach to that hearty^{*} communion and good-fellowship which became the company in which we met. There was not a word of that cant of common-place authorship which pretends to bow to the justice of severe criticism, and to deprecate that which is otherwise. On the contrary, he told me frankly, and at once, that until Hazlitt had told him who the article was written by, he had always looked upon it as the effusion of some personal enemy, who wished and sought to do him all the harm they could in his new career of authorship; but that since Hazlitt had assured him that such was anything but the case, he had taken a totally different view of the remarks—that he now believed most of the censure to be just, and did not feel anything like anger or resentment on the subject.

The cordial and hearty terms and tone in

which this feeling and belief were expressed made it impossible to doubt their sincerity, or to withhold one's esteem for the frank good-nature from which they sprang. Nor has a cordial acquaintance and intimacy, subsisting up to the present time, tended in any degree to change this impression; while the subsequent writings of this distinguished man have convinced me that my first impressions of his talents as a dramatic writer did him manifest injustice in some particulars, and fell far short of his merits in others.

There was no one in whose welfare and success as a writer Hazlitt seemed to feel more personal interest than in those of Sheridan Knowles; and this interest was heightened, rather than repressed, by an impression he entertained, that there was a singular absence in Knowles of that mental and moral correspondence between the writer and his productions which we are so apt to expect, and so disappointed and perplexed at not finding. I never knew Hazlitt wholly at fault as to the intellectual qualities of a man, or unable to assign

plausible explanation of the results of those qualities, except in the case of Sheridan Knowles. He says, in his "Spirit of the Age:"—"We should not feel that we had discharged our obligations to truth and friendship if we were to let this volume go without introducing into it the name of the author of 'Virginus.' This is the more proper, inasmuch as he is a character by himself, and the only poet now living that is *a mere poet*. If we were asked what sort of a man Mr. Knowles is, we could only say, he is the writer of 'Virginus.' His most intimate friends see nothing in him by which they could trace the work to the author."

I know of nothing more unlike Hazlitt's usual sagacity and penetration than this unmeaning and, at the same time, contradictory award. Knowles, he says, is "a mere poet;" by which it is impossible to guess what he means. Then he is, essentially and by way of distinction, "the sort of man" that you would describe as "the writer of 'Virginus.' " And, finally, "his most intimate friends" cannot discover any correspondence between the author so designated and the work from

which the designation is derived! What follows, too, though more just, is not much more specific or discriminative. "Virginius," says Hazlitt, is "the best acting tragedy that has been produced on the modern stage;" and "Mr. Knowles is the first tragic writer of the age;" but "in other respects he is a common man."

What is the explanation of all this contradiction? For if we can find one, it will unquestionably involve a characteristic feature in the extraordinary mind that it is the chief business of these pages to illustrate. That explanation, as it seems to me, is to be found in the following words, which conclude Hazlitt's hasty glance at the author of "Virginius:"—" *We have known him almost from a child*, and we must say he appears to us the same boy-poet that he ever was."

Now, Sheridan Knowles is not many years younger than Hazlitt would have been were he alive now—perhaps six or seven; consequently, the very earliest of the associations of Hazlitt's opening intellect were connected with the idea of "the boy-poet," and he neither would nor could consent to dissipate

those early associations, a single train of which was worth the whole sum and substance of his after-life. For Knowles's benefit and pleasure Hazlitt would have had the world regard him as another Shakspeare, if it pleased. But for him (Hazlitt) Knowles could never be anything higher or better than the frank and warm-hearted friend and companion of those few opening years of his life which he could alone recall with any feelings of satisfaction.

XXVI.

HAZLITT IN LOVE.—ORIGIN OF THE “LIBER AMORIS.”

—EXTRACTS FROM HAZLITT’S LETTERS.—

CONCLUSION.

I SCARCELY know whether or not it will be thought that the proper time has arrived for explaining the true origin of the strange, and, to all but those who are more or less acquainted with its history beforehand, the utterly unintelligible work above named—the “Liber Amoris.” The prevalent opinion on such purely personal matters seems to be, that a profound silence should be preserved on them until such time as all those who know anything about them have passed from the scene; or, at all events, that those who can alone furnish the true materials for such records cannot be permitted to tell their tale; while those who avowedly know nothing about the matter may talk of and discuss it to their heart’s content.

Yet the world has lately begun to feel that

Moore, for instance, having accepted, had almost as little right to destroy the autobiography that Byron entrusted to his care, to be published after his death, as he had to destroy the man himself during his life.

Hazlitt's personal reputation has suffered more, even in the estimation of wise and good men, from the publication of the "*Liber Amoris*," than from anything else that his enemies or himself have written or said or done against him. And the simple reason is, that the real history and origin of the book remain to this day a mystery, to all but a few individuals, some of whom are afraid and others ashamed to speak of it; and that, consequently, it has been made the fertile topic on which Hazlitt's personal enemies, and the lovers of literary scandal in general, have propagated all sorts of ridiculous fictions and fabrications, all more or less discreditable to the persons to whom they relate, and none that I have ever heard having the smallest foundation in fact.

For my own part, I should have been disposed to tell the truth on this strange and interesting episode in Hazlitt's life, whatever

that truth might have been; because the design of these pages is to furnish, so far as I possess the materials, a *true*, not a favourable picture of the mind and heart to which they relate. But seeing, as I do, in the materials of this little history, nothing that is morally discreditable to any of the parties connected with it, much that is honourable to all, and (in the personal details of it, as it regards Hazlitt himself) something as touching as anything I am acquainted with in the actual history of the human heart, I do not feel that I have a right wholly to suppress those materials, in deference to the false or the pretended *delicacy* of those who never use the word but in an indelicate sense.

The story of Hazlitt's love for the female who is the subject of the "*Liber Amoris*," could he himself have delivered it to the world in the form of "a round unvarnished tale," would have made one of the most beautiful and affecting chapters in the Romance of Real Life, that was ever put on paper; one that it would have been impossible to peruse without the reader's heart being softened by a sense of its own weak-

ness, while it was elevated and purified by a perception of the moral grandeur and beauty to which its affections may lift it.

There is nothing in poetry more truly poetical, nothing more ennobling by the strength of its passion, while it is no less softening and humanizing by the depth and darkness of its pathos, than much of what is contained in a series of letters written to me by Hazlitt, during the time when he was most under the influence of the devouring passion to which I am now referring. And as to the truth and *reality* of every word there written, none who knew him will believe that anything but the very intensity of that reality could have impelled him to write them *at all*. Such was his almost physical incapacity of writing *a letter* on any subject, however imperatively his worldly occasions might require one, that I suppose all the rest of the correspondence of his whole literary life would scarcely make up the amount of what I received from him during the three months he was absent in Scotland, in consequence of circumstances arising out of the affair in question: and this during the

period when he was employed on, and had actually completed in six weeks, an entire volume of his most remarkable Essays.

It is from these letters that I shall furnish some brief but sufficiently explanatory materials for the true history of the "*Liber Amoris*." And if any one, with these materials for judgment and scrutiny before him, can entertain towards the man to whom they relate any less kindly feelings than those arising out of pain and pity, he must have formed strange notions on the constitution of, and little sympathy with, our common nature.

As the extracts I shall give will, so far as is needful, tell their own story, I shall only premise further, that the heroine of this romance of real life was the daughter of persons of respectable character and connexions, in whose house Hazlitt lodged for a considerable length of time immediately previous to the date of the following letters; and that her personal appearance and manner were scarcely overrated, even in the lover's estimate of them which may be gathered from the letters themselves.

I give these extracts in the order in

which the letters they are taken from reached me,—so far at least as this can be made out by the post-marks; for nearly all the letters are without date.

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS FROM W. HAZLITT TO
P. G. PATMORE (DATED BETWEEN MARCH
AND JULY, 1822).

“What have I suffered since I parted with you! A raging fire in my heart and in my brain, that I thought would drive me mad. The steam-boat seemed a prison—a hell—and the everlasting waters an unendurable repetition of the same idea—my woes. The abyss was before me, and *her* face, where all my peace was centred—all lost! I felt the eternity of punishment in this world. Mocked, mocked by her in whom I placed my hope—writhing, withering in misery and despair, caused by one who hardens herself against me. I wished for courage to throw myself into the waters; but I could not even do that—and my little boy, too, prevented me, when I thought of his face at hearing of his father’s death, and his desolation in life.

* * * * *

“You see she all along hated me (‘I

always told you I had no affection for you'), and only played with me.

"I am a little, a very little, better to-day. Would it were quietly over, and that this form, made to be loathed, were hid out of sight of cold, sullen eyes. I thought of the breakfasts I had promised myself with her, of those I had had with her, standing and listening to my true vows ; and compared them to the one I had this morning. The thought choked me. The people even take notice of my dumb despair, and pity me. What can be done ? I cannot forget her, and I can find no other like *what she seemed*. I should like you to see her, and learn whether I may come back again as before, and whether she will see and talk to me as an old friend. Do as you think best."

"I got your letter this morning, and I kiss the rod, not only with submission, but with gratitude. Your rebukes of me and your defence of her are the only things that save my soul from hell. She is my soul's idol, and, believe me, those words of yours applied to the dear creature ('to lip a chaste one and

suppose her wanton') were balm and rapture to me.

"Be it known to you, that while I write this, I am drinking ale* at the Black Bull, celebrated in Blackwood's. It is owing to your letter. Could I think her 'honest,' I am proof even against Edinburgh ale! She, by her silence, makes my 'dark hour,' and you dissipate it—for four-and-twenty hours.

* * * * *

"I have seen the great little man,† and he is very gracious to me. I tell him I am dull and out of spirits, but he says he cannot perceive it. He is a person of infinite vivacity. My Sardanapalus is to be in.‡

"In my judgment, Myrrha is just like ———, only I am not like Sardanapalus.

"Do you think if she knew how I love her, my depressions and my altitudes, my wanderings and my pertinacity, it would not melt her? She knows it all! I don't

* He had not for years previously touched anything but water, except his beloved tea, nor did he afterwards, up to the period of his last illness.

† Jeffrey.

‡ An article in the Edinburgh Review on Byron's tragedy so called.

believe that any human being was ever courted more passionately than she has been by me. As Rousseau said of Madame d'Houdetot (forgive the allusion), my soul has found a tongue in speaking to her, and I have talked to her in the divine language of love. Yet she says she is insensible to it. Am I to believe her or you? You; for I wish it to madness."

"The deed is done, and I am virtually a free man. * * * What had I better do in these circumstances? I dare not write to her—I dare not write to her father. She has shot me through with poisoned arrows, and I think another 'winged wound' would finish me. It is a pleasant sort of balm she has left in my heart. One thing I agree with you in—it will remain there for ever—but yet not long. It festers and consumes me. If it were not for my little boy, whose face I see struck blank at the news, and looking through the world for pity, and meeting with contempt, I should soon settle the question my death. That is the only thought."

brings my wandering reason to an anchor—that excites the least interest, or gives me fortitude to bear up against what I am doomed to feel for *the ungrateful*. Otherwise, I am dead to all but the agony of what I have lost. She was my life—it is gone from me, and I am grown spectral. If it is a place I know, it reminds me of her—of the way in which my fond heart brooded over her. If it is a strange place, it is desolate, hateful, barren of all interest—for nothing touches me but what has a reference to her. There is only she in the world—‘the false, the fair, the inexpressive she.’ If the clock strikes, the sound jars me, for a million of hours will never bring peace to my breast. The light startles me, the darkness terrifies me—I seem falling into a pit, without a hand to help me. She came (I knew not how) and sat by my side, and was folded in my arms, a vision of love and joy—as if she had dropped from the heavens, to bless me by some special dispensation of a favouring Providence—to make me amends for all. And now, without any fault of mine but too much love, she has vanished from me, and I am left to wither. My heart

is torn out of me, and every feeling for which I wished to live. It is like a dream, an enchantment—it torments me, and makes me mad. I lie down with it—I rise up with it—and I see no chance of repose. I grasp at a shadow—I try to undo the past, or to make that mockery real—and weep with rage and pity over my own weakness and misery. * *

“ I had hopes, I had prospects to come—the flattering of something like fame—a pleasure in writing—health even would have come back to me with her smile. She has blighted all—turned all to poison and drivelling tears. Yet the barbed arrow is in my heart—I can neither endure it nor draw it out, for with it flows my life’s blood. I had dwelt too long upon Truth to trust myself with the immortal thoughts of love. *That — — might have been mine—and now never can*: these are the two sole propositions that for ever stare me in the face, and look ghastly in at my poor brain. I am in some sense proud that I can feel this dreadful passion. It makes me a kind of *peer* in the kingdom of love. But I *could* it had been for an object *that*

have understood its value and pitied its excess. * * * The gates of Paradise were once open to me, and I blushed to enter but with the golden keys of love ! I would die—but her lover—my love of her—ought not to die. When I am dead, who will love her as I have done ? If she should be in misfortune, who will comfort her ? When she is old, who will look in her face and bless her ? * * * Oh, answer me, to save me if possible *for* her and *from* myself !

“ Will you call at Mr. ——’s school, and tell my little boy I’ll write to him or see him on Saturday morning. Poor little fellow ! ”

“ Your letter raised me a moment from the depths of despair ; but, not hearing from you yesterday or to-day (as I hoped), I am gone back again. You say I want to get rid of her. I hope you are more right in your conjectures about her than in this about me. Oh, no ! believe it, I love her as I do my own soul : my heart is wedded to her, be she *what* she may ; and I would not hesitate a moment between her and an angel from heaven. I

grant all you say about my self-tormenting madness; but has it been without cause? Has she not refused me again and again with scorn and abhorrence? * * * 'She can make no more confidences!' These words ring for ever in my ears, and will be my deathwatch. My poor fond heart, that brooded over her, and the remains of her affections, as my only hope of comfort upon earth, cannot brook or survive this vulgar degradation. Who is there so low as I? Who is there besides, after the homage I have paid her, and the caresses she has lavished on me, so vile, so filthy, so abhorrent to love, to whom such an indignity could have happened? When I think of this (and I think of it for ever, except when I read your letters), the air I breathe stifles me. I am pent up in burning impotent desires, which can find no vent or object. I am hated, repulsed, bemocked, by all I love. I cannot stay in any place, and find no rest or interruption from the thought of her tempt, and her ingratitude. I am nothing. What is the use of all I do? Is it not that my thinking

strength, my feeling more than I ought about so many things, has withered me up, and made me a thing for love to shrink from and wonder at? Who could ever feel that peace from the touch of her hand that I have done; and is it not torn for ever from me? My state is, that I feel I shall never lie down again at night, nor rise up of a morning in peace, nor ever behold my little boy's face with pleasure while I live, unless I am restored to her favour. Instead of that delicious feeling I had when she was heavenly kind to me, and my heart softened and melted in its own tenderness and her sweetness, I am now enclosed in a dungeon of despair. The sky is marblè, like my thoughts; nature is dead without me, as hope is within me; no object can give me one gleam of satisfaction now, or the prospect of it in time to come. I wander, or rather crawl, by the seaside; and the eternal ocean, and lasting despair, and her face, are before me. Hated, mocked by her on whom my heart by its last fibre hung. I wake with her by my side, not as my sweet companion, but as the corpse of my love, without a heart

in her—cold, insensible, or struggling from me; and the worm gnaws me, and the sting of unrequited love, and the canker of a hopeless, endless sorrow. I have lost the taste of my food by feverish anxiety; and my tea, which used to refresh me when I got up, has no moisture in it. Oh! cold, solitary, sepulchral breakfasts, compared to those which I made when she was standing by my side; my Eve, my guardian angel, my wife, my sister, my sweet friend, my all. * * * Ah! what I suffer now, shows only what I have felt before.

“But you say, ‘The girl is a good girl, if there is goodness in human nature.’ I thank you for those words, and I will fall down and worship you, if you can prove them true; and I would not do much less to him that proves her a demon.

“Do let me know if anything has passed; suspense is my greatest torment. I am going to Renton Inn, to see if I can work a little.”

“I ought to have written you before; but since I received your letter I have

been in a sort of hell. I would put an end to my torments at once, but that I am as great a coward as I am a fool. Do you know that I have not had a word of answer from her since? What can be the reason? Is she offended at my letting you know she wrote to me? or is it some new amour? I wrote to her in the tenderest, most respectful manner—poured my soul at her feet—and this is the way she serves me! Can you account for it, except on the admission of my worst suspicion? God! can I bear to think of her so—or that I am scorned and made a sport of by the creature to whom I have given my very heart? I feel like one of the damned. To be hated, loathed as I have been all my life, and to feel the utter impossibility of its ever being otherwise while I live, take what pains I may! I sit and cry my eyes out. My weakness grows upon me, and I have no hope left, unless I could lose my senses quite. I think I should like this. To forget—ah! to forget—there would be something in that—to be an idiot for some few years, and then wake up a poor, wretched,

old man, to recollect my misery as past, and die! Yet, oh! with her, only a little while ago, I had different hopes—forfeited for nothing that I know of.”

“I was in hopes to have got away by the steam-boat to-morrow, but owing to * * * I cannot, and may not be in town till another week, unless I come by the mail, which I am strongly tempted to do. In the latter case, I shall be there on Saturday evening. Will you look in and see, about eight o’clock? I wish much to see you, and her, and John Hunt, and my little boy, once more; and then, if she is not what she once was to me, I care not if I die that instant.”

Many of the letters in the “Nouvelle Héloïse” are among the most beautiful and affecting effusions which exist in those works of fiction that concern themselves with sentiment and passion, rather than with incident and action. But, I venture to say, that

is nothing in the "Nouvelle Héloïse" equal in passion and pathos to the foregoing extracts. And the reason is, that the latter are actual and immediate transcripts from the human heart. In this respect, the letters from which these extracts are taken are, perhaps, more beautiful and touching than anything of their kind that was ever given to the world. But I am far from doubting that innumerable others exist, equalling them in all the qualities in which *they* excel; for real and intense passion levels all ranks of intellect, laughs learning and worldly wisdom to scorn, and invests the common-places of life with the highest attributes of poetry and eloquence.

Perhaps the published writings most resembling these letters in the depth and intensity of the passion they embody and convey, are the celebrated letters addressed by Mary Woolstoncraft to Imlay.

LAMAN BLANCHARD.

LAMAN BLANCHARD.

I.

ORIGIN OF MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH HIM.—AN HONEST
COURTIER.—THE DEFECTS OF HIS INTELLECTUAL
CHARACTER.

MY first acquaintance with Laman Blanchard arose out of that (now-a-days rare) *esprit-de-corps* which marked the whole of his literary career, and invariably impelled him to exercise his fine critical faculties in a generous and genial spirit. He was at the time I speak of (in 1836) editor of a journal, with the proprietor of which I had recently had serious differences on pecuniary matters, that led to legal proceedings on my part, which, after great expenses on both sides, had just ended in the usual way—namely, without (so at least each party conceived) anything like justice being obtained by either.

This was an awkward crisis at which to gratify the natural aspiration of an aggrieved proprietor of half-a-dozen literary organs—"Oh that mine enemy would write a book!" But it so happened that I had no escape from the threatened peril.* The desiderated book was written and published; circumstances required that the author's name should appear in the title-page; and I was prepared for the worst,—looking for that worst from the particular quarter over which Blanchard presided, because there, as I believed, the sinister influence in question was less under control than elsewhere. On the dreaded review making its appearance, however, it turned out to be a panegyric, of the most gratifying and flattering description; and, on inquiry, I found that it was written by Blanchard himself.

This struck me as being so marked a ~~step~~ping aside from his course to do a liberal and generous thing (for he could not fail to be aware of my peculiar position with his *chef*) that, contrary to my feeling of what ought

* The peril, I have since had good reason to believe, was wholly imaginary on my part.

to be the rule in such matters, I could not help addressing a note of acknowledgment to the writer; and his reply gave occasion to a personal meeting, which led to an intimacy that ended only with his life.

As the little note above alluded to is no less characteristic of its writer than is the circumstance which gave rise to it, I shall insert it here.

“Dec. 9, 1836.

“DEAR SIR,—I am much more obliged by your courteous and welcome note than you can be to me for a comment that was merely just. It was, indeed, on the niggardly side of justice; but it was hurriedly done, and many occupations during the following week left me no leisure to resume the subject.

“I assure you it would afford me no slight gratification to settle this delicate balance of obligation by personal conference, and

“I am, your faithful servant,

“LAMAN BLANCHARD.”

This note, slight as it is, may be cited as a marking exemplification of that peculiar style and tone of social intercourse, at once courtly and cordial, which formed so large an ele-

ment of the causes of Blanchard's personal popularity with his friends, who, though they included many of the finest and most cultivated spirits of the time, were none of them proof against the fascinating flattery of such notes as these.

I must be allowed to dwell for a few moments on this point at the outset of my Recollections of Laman Blanchard, because it marks one of the leading features, and perhaps the only defective one, of his intellectual character, and one which was singularly reflected and typified in his eloquent and expressive countenance.

Paradoxical as it may sound to the reader who was unacquainted with Laman Blanchard, and unjust as it will probably seem to many of his personal acquaintance and to some even of his friends,—though perfectly sincere in all he said and wrote of and to those friends and acquaintance, he was nevertheless a true courtier, even in the court sense of the phrase ;—in other words, whatever he had to say or write, he possessed the art of invariably using the mingled art and good nature of turning it all “to favour an

prettiness," and of so turning it, that suspicion of its sincerity could not intrude to mar the flattering effect.

Nor *was* there, in point of fact, any insincerity in Blanchard's courtliness; and this was the secret of his unequalled social popularity. The beautiful mask which his mind almost always wore, and which was reflected in the *set* smile that always illumined his regular and finely moulded, but small and somewhat sharp features, was not a thing put on for the nonce, to serve a purpose; it was a natural endowment. The extreme sweetness, amounting to benignity, of his natural disposition, rendered him that anomaly in social life, a *natural* courtier—a courtier without knowing or intending it—above all, without thinking or hoping to get anything by it.

But if this was one of the great charms of Blanchard's mind and personal bearing, it was also their one besetting sin; for it made him equally beloved and popular with all manner of men; which an honest and delicately-minded man can scarcely permit himself to be.

Nor was the damaging effect which this quality produced on Blanchard's otherwise clear and transparent spirit its most pardonable sin. Landor, in one of his noble "Conversations," makes Alfieri brand "the lumber of the Italian courts," for having "ruined his physiognomy," by impressing a perpetual scowl of contempt upon it, "even when he whispered words of love in the prone ear of his donna." In like manner the honied sweetness of Laman Blanchard's temperament "ruined his physiognomy," by impressing a perpetual smile upon it, even when uttering words of no-meaning courtesy in the pleased ear of a knave or a fool.

It is true that Blanchard could occasionally get into a passion, like the best or the worst of us; and then he could be, and could look, as bitter and biting as the most ill-conditioned of satirists or malcontents, and as small-souled as the meanest of them. But the *rule* of his mind and temper was a condition literally overflowing with the milk and honey of human kindness; and this habitual condition so moulded its type upon

his countenance, that though the thing represented was a living reality, the type was a dead mask, that at once falsified and disfigured the features it marked.

II.

RESEMBLANCES AND CONTRASTS BETWEEN BLANCHARD
AND C. LAMB.

THIS early stage of my Recollections of Laman Blanchard seems the proper place for what I have to remark, on the striking constitutional and superficial resemblances that existed between Blanchard and his only rival as a popular Essayist, Charles Lamb; resemblances, however, which were worn, like Ophelia's flowers, with such a marked "difference," that they led to results, both personal and intellectual, as apparently unlike as possible. There was about an equal amount of oriental blood in the veins of each, and it produced the same physical characters—namely, coal-black curling hair, jet black eyes, a dark colourless complexion, and a slightly Jewish contour and expression of features. But while one of these remarkable men, Blanchard, was always gay, brilliant, fluent, and facile, the happy and happy-

making equal, and as it were echo, of all with whom he came in contact, and consequently the favourite of all; the other was habitually grave, taciturn, self-absorbed, abrupt yet hesitating of speech, and not seldom, to strangers, harsh in manner to a pitch of repulsiveness.

This difference of mere manner between Blanchard and Lamb was perhaps to be accounted for by the habits and incidents of their early lives respectively; the boyhood of the one—Charles Lamb—having been spent in the almost monastic seclusion of the severest and most temper-trying of our public schools—that of Christ's Church; his early youth, and all the rest of his life, being nailed for eight hours a day to the desk of a public office; while Blanchard was thrown absolutely on his own resources from early boyhood, and had to win or fight his way through the battle of life, with no better weapon than a self-taught pen, and no richer wealth than "his own good spirits, to feed and clothe him."

The moral and intellectual resemblances of these two men were equally striking, and

were equally worn with marked and almost strange differences. There was a benign humanity, a truly *Christian* spirit and temper, about both, which I have never seen equalled, or even approached, in any other men—a universal loving-kindness and toleration, which scarcely allowed them to see, and absolutely forbade them to feel, any essential difference, morally and humanly speaking, between the vilest of mankind and the purest, between the wisest and the weakest. And yet this universal and almost divine sympathy and toleration, so far from deadening their sense of superior moral claims and intellectual endowments in individual instances, seemed to act in precisely an opposite direction; and this was especially the case with Blanchard, who felt an almost worshipful and religious admiration for superiority of intellectual or moral pretensions, of whatever kind they might be. Still, with this marked difference—that Lamb's admiration was confined almost exclusively to the dead, while Blanchard's was offered chiefly to the living.

There were other personal resemblances between Blanchard and Lamb that are worth

a passing mention. For both of them there was but one place in the world worth living in, or absent from which (I verily believe) either of them could have lived—London. To them, “the country” was not merely a desert, a privation, a blank ; there was something in it positively unpleasant and even hateful to them ; not merely in its stocks and stones, but in its flowers and plants and trees, its uplands and meadows and rivers, its forests and skies ; even the song of its birds and the sights and sounds of its daily life were empty and unmeaning impertinences to them, when put in competition with the pregnant converse of books, the living interchange of intellectual table-talk, or the active movements of their own minds while scattering about them the wisdom and wit that flowed as it were involuntarily from their pens, like the pearls and diamonds from the lips of the fairy.

Another propensity which Blanchard and Lamb had in common—and it was the only really questionable one of their blameless lives—was their fondness for being surrounded by a little coterie of friends and

admirers who were inferior in intellectual pretensions to themselves—as all coteries must necessarily be to the leader round whom they naturally revolve by the force of a moral gravitation.

Yet the motives to this propensity were anything but those vulgar ones which are the usual leaders to the like result—namely, a desire for admiration and a love of observance. It was, in fact, of a precisely opposite character—an emanation of that universal loving-kindness which was the motive-principle of both their characters—added to a perhaps secret desire—secret, I mean, from themselves—to show that all distinctions founded on purely intellectual differences are false and mischievous ones, and ought to be discouraged by the few who can afford or can dare to take the just and natural course in such matters. In fact, though the nightly meetings at Blanchard's and Lamb's houses were occasionally illustrated by the presence of some of the finest spirits of the time, they furnished (even on those occasions) an admirable lesson and discipline to the pride of place and of intellect—all being equally cared

for and distinguished by the common host of all.

These marked general resemblances between Blanchard and Lamb rendered still more notable than it would otherwise have been the striking difference, or rather the positive dissimilarity, in the habitual expression of their countenances; the one, as I have said, at all times and on all occasions, wearing the mask of an almost angelic smile; the other apparently incapable of receiving any such expression—so grave and contemplative was it, so free from all traces of human passion—so purely and entirely intellectual.

It may illustrate this point to observe that Lamb's face resembled one of Titian's finest portraits; not what we may fancy the original to have been, but the portrait itself; one of those quintessences of intellect which have never proceeded from any other pencil, and which probably had no perfect prototypes in actual nature, any more than had those corresponding female portraits of Lawrence, in respect of that peculiar look (not susceptible of verbal description) which marks, and in some respect mars, all those

of Lawrence's finest works which represent young and beautiful women.

Finally, the writings of Blanchard and Lamb were marked by precisely the same generic resemblances and differences as were their temperaments, their intellects, and their dispositions. There was in both that entire originality, which is not merely the test, but the substance of all genius ; genius being nothing else but an idiosyncrasy peculiar to the individual ; the faculties which bring out, mould, modify, and colour its intellectual results, being common to the species.

There was, also, in both these charming writers that exquisite clearness of perception, that acute penetration, and that refined and delicate tact, which together constitute the critical faculty in its highest and purest form, and which faculty, when it attains to that highest form (I will venture to add), never fails to usurp some portion of the *creative* power with which it is busying itself. There never was a truly great critic who did not see more in a great work of *art* than really exists in it. In Blanchard's

habit was best illustrated in his brilliant and rapid table-talk on any one of his literary idols, but particularly on the chief of them, Shakspeare. In Lamb it is sufficiently shown in his "Specimens,"—those crude and indigested amusements of a few idle hours, which have created an era in English criticism, not to say in English literature.

Perhaps there never existed two critics who more precisely coincided in the general nature and tone of their critical tastes and awards than did Blanchard and Lamb; the only difference being, that Lamb confined himself almost exclusively to Shakspeare and the early dramatists, whereas the Catholic taste and all-embracing spirit of

Blanchard ranged over the whole (English) world of poetry—not loving Wordsworth less, because he idolised Shakspeare, nor dwelling the less fondly upon Tennyson because he had the whole of Pope.

I should, perhaps, apologise for the foregoing crude and hasty (such it can be called) between two remarkable men. But as it is more or less present to my own mind

dwells on the personal recollection of either of them, I have thought it likely to assist in strengthening and fixing the respective impressions of them, which I wish to convey to the reader.

III.

BLANCHARD IN THE COUNTRY.—LETTERS TO
P. G. PATMORE.

I HAVE said that Blanchard disliked the country. But this must be taken with that qualification which every broad and sweeping assertion respecting the leading features of his character would require ; for, so plastic was his temperament, that he could learn to like or dislike anything or anybody, so far as the immutable principles of truth and justice did not forbid. He disliked the country, because the necessities of the social position he had imposed upon himself made it indispensable to his personal comfort and peace of mind that he should do so. He had, as it were, sold himself, body and soul, to the brilliant slavery of the periodical and newspaper press. This was the only literary employment capable of giving full play to the almost morbid activity of his mind ; and, in devoting himself to it, he not only

accepted the conditions of the bond, but "made up his mind" to the belief that those conditions were "wisest, virtuous, discreetest, best."

But when Blanchard did occasionally permit himself to escape from his beloved London "to that world elsewhere," in which he scarcely allowed himself to believe, except when he was in the presence of it, the latent sympathy with external nature which was inherent in his truly poetical temperament burst out with a force proportioned to the length of time it had been suppressed. I shall never forget the tumult of almost childish delight in which he passed part of two days with me at my house at Highwood Hill, and the sort of desperate resolution with which, at last, he tore himself away from what he seemed to regard as a perilous temptation to be false to his London allegiance.

The following is his half-unwilling attempt to escape from another proposed social meeting, every feature of which would have been agreeable to him, except that of the scene of it being ten miles from town. He

afterwards, however, joined the meeting, the day being changed to accommodate him. The invitation had been sent to him through me.

“Jan. 1, 1843.

“DEAR PATMORE,—Friday is always a writing day with me, for the “Examiner” work, not to be done earlier or later in the week. So, unhappily (at least for me), I am obliged to write to —, foregoing the proffered engagement. I had supposed you to be at Hendon or Harrow, by the account Hazlitt gave me, or I should have sought you in Southampton Street, whither, indeed, I was about to bend my steps, when I encountered the said Hazlitt. Ever since you strolled over here I have been “going” to do so. Your account, however, of the haymaking freaks amuses me mightily, and suggests a pretty moral as to the evils that wait on absentee landlords. The same story reminds me of Leigh Hunt’s anecdote of the two boys (his own cockney subjects), who, having reached Primrose Hill, dreaded penetrating farther into the wild and seemingly uninhabited

country. 'I've heard say there's thieves,' says one, 'out in them fields past the hill.' 'Yes,' cries the other, '*and some say serpents!*' Your note, besides its pleasant enclosure, opens up the agreeable prospect of seeing you all out in your rural domain. But *you* are not leaving London! Think of the great Samuel. 'Why, sir, the man who desires to leave London, desires to leave life.'

"Yours ever,

"L. BLANCHARD.

"What are you doing in the country?"

Here is another of his pleasant notes, written on a similar occasion, of my wishing him and his family to change a scene which had just been darkened by domestic trouble.

"Aug. 6, 1843.

"MY DEAR PATMORE,—We are delighted with your kind note, which, though we could not any of us start off to take advantage of it, was the more welcome for coming in a season of trouble,—one of my little boys having had his face cut to pieces by the bursting of a soda-water bottle. It has

made my wife ten thousand times more nervous than ever ; but the eye is safe and untouched, and she will get better again presently. I fear, however, most kind and tempting as your invitation is, and grateful as we feel to Mrs. Patmore and you, that there is little chance for my wife at present, as we are *almost* going to Hastings in a week, where I shall not stay above a day or two, and may consequently run down to you speedily, for four-and-twenty hours, giving you notice, in order to secure you at home. I have nothing to say *to-day* about Sidney, except that you are very kind to him, and that he is very lucky. Your note and its explicit directions are as good as any guide book extant, and to miss one's way is impossible.

“ Our friendliest regards to Mrs. Patmore, and my especial remembrances to C. P.

“ Yours ever,

“ LAMAN BLANCHARD.

“ I have been writing night and day about the subscription for the children of my poor old friend Elton ; it is most successful.”

IV.

BLANCHARD AS A POET.—HIS SYMPATHY WITH A
YOUTHFUL POET.—THREE LETTERS.

THE following letters refer to a topic to which Blanchard used to recur from time to time, with feelings of mingled fondness and pain that were very interesting to witness, for those who alone did witness them—the friends to whom he could show the inmost places of his heart.

All the world know that, next to their inventor, Macworth Praed, Blanchard was the most fertile and felicitous writer we have had, of those light, easy, and smiling verses which are one of the very few original features of the literature of our own day. But many even of his (Blanchard's) own admirers and associates did not know until after his death that he had published, at the outset of his literary career, a volume of serious poetry; still less that this volume was the only one among the numerous progeny of

his pen for which he entertained any real fondness, or to which he ever referred with feelings of literary pride or pleasure.

There was something very touching about the timid and deprecating modesty with which Blanchard sometimes recurred to this "first love" of his literary life, and to which he remained true to the last, through twenty years of forced separation and divorce.

The first conversation I had with Blanchard on this topic was brought about by my asking him to look at some verses by my son, then a youth of eighteen. This led him to speak of his own youthful volume, and of a criticism on it by Sir Edward Bulwer, in the *New Monthly Magazine*. This criticism, which is no more than bare justice (administered in a kind and admiring spirit) fully warrants, had called forth in Blanchard an amount of gratitude to its author which he seemed to think his life could not be long enough to testify; and he was evidently so pleased with the fair pretext which now occurred for sending it to me (namely, that it contained "a good scrap of advice to young poets") that I had not the

heart to tell him I had read the paper, and well recollected it.

Here are the three letters: the first appointing a meeting to hear some of my boy's verses; the second written the morning after having heard them, and enclosing Bulwer's paper from the *New Monthly*; and the third (without date) a few days after.

"Nov. 1, 1842.

"MY DEAR PATMORE,—Influenza has visited us here, and prevented my writing yesterday. Moreover, I have been seeking for that article on 'Young Poets and the Public,' and cannot find it; but I must,—it was in *N. M. M.*, June, 1832. Thursday is rather a bespoken night. May I look in about seven or so on Friday? You will see me, unless you be engaged then, in which case one line will do.

"Yours always truly,

"LAMAN BLANCHARD."

"Nov. 8, 1842.

"DEAR PATMORE,—I have to-day recovered the notice I alluded to. It contains a good

scrap of advice to young poets, and is written with amazing generosity, as I had never seen him at the time, and he had heard of my verses only through Miss Landon. The things quoted were written in 1824, when I was twenty.

“My strong and clear conviction of the extreme beauty and finish of what I heard and read last night remains this morning undiminished. They will bear thinking over, and the impression they made is a lasting one, I am sure. Nothing Tennyson has done need be despaired of.

“Yours always,

“LAMAN BLANCHARD.

“Preserve my paper for me.”

“MY DEAR PATMORE,—I was just going to write, as your note arrived, to put off the Kensingtonian excursion for a couple of Sundays, as I find I *must* be at home to-morrow (and the Count, I just happen to hear, dines out). Your suggestion increases my wishes, without diminishing my inability. But I think I can drop in on Monday, between eight and nine. If by chance

I should not, I will on Tuesday ; but Monday almost past doubt, if you are at home ; and if not, no harm, as I shall be near.

“ I shall esteem it an honour and a pleasure to be allowed to see anything that may be producible, then and at all times ; for so strong is the feeling fixed in my mind, that I do not calculate on disappointment. As for you, your course is clear ; there can be no mistake.

“ Ever yours,

“ L. BLANCHARD.”

Blanchard gave me an amusing account afterwards of the half-serious, half-comic alarm he had felt on my first asking him to look at and give me his “ honest ” opinion of my son’s verses, and his fears as to the shifts he should be put to in escaping the dilemma in which (“ of course,” as he said) he should find himself, of either compromising his own honesty or wounding that parental partiality with which he so well knew how to sympathise. The occasion of the following note was probably an unconsciously wilful escape for the moment from his comic difficulty ; at

the same time giving him the chance of my tacitly letting him off the promise into which his good-nature had inveigled him. And I was half inclined to do so, but that I had great faith in his judgment and taste, and did not believe that his courtly good-nature would be able to deceive me as to his real opinion, even if his honesty had permitted him to make the attempt.

“ MY DEAR PATMORE,—I fear I may have kept you at home, and inconvenienced you ; but I am beset with work. I had arranged all my ‘ Examiner ’ matters, so that six o’clock was to have seen me released, but ——’s absence has put me out, and I cannot possibly stir from the paper. I have now, at five o’clock, very much to do. On Monday, at half-past seven, without fail, expect me, unless forbidden by your own hand in the interim. *Any* night but Wednesday will suit me ; only I name the first of the week.

“ Yours in haste, and truly,

“ L. BLANCHARD.”

V.

L. BLANCHARD TO P. G. PATMORE.—MISS BARRETT'S
POEMS.—BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

THE following letter relates to a review which Blanchard wrote in the New Monthly Magazine of my son's Poems, when they were published as a volume some months afterwards:—

“ Tuesday.

“ DEAR PATMORE,—That you so feel about the New Monthly Magazine is most gratifying to me. * * * *

“ — spoke kindly, yet as if some *tiff* with you were in the way, and he despaired of my pleasing *all* parties, which was the *condition* on which I was to have the two or three pages—afterwards extended, by special note, to three and a half, with a desire that I would take to the twenty-eighth of the month, rather than hurry or spoil it. * *

“ I took care, under the circumstances, to

put my *objections* as strong as I honestly could, as I was anxious that it should not look like a partial and compromised notice. B——'s letter satisfied C. that what I said in eulogy was tame and modest in comparison. That letter I was about to return when you wrote. It is all that was to be expected from such a mind and such a heart as his; and I feel happy in the thought that Coventry secures in him a valuable friend and adviser. * * *

"You may tell Coventry that I have, for the first time, been reading Miss Barrett's poems—one at least—and am raving about her. I thought her a pretender—God forgive me! Pray give my sincere regards to Mrs. Patmore.

"Yours ever,

"L. BLANCHARD."

My son had been speaking to him about Miss Barrett's (now Mrs. Browning's) poetry at our last meeting. That exclamation—"God forgive me!"—is as beautiful and expressive in itself as it is characteristic of the writer; for Blanchard had a love and

reverence nothing less than religious for true poetry ; it was the chief “ means of salvation ” to which he resorted when feeling himself (as he so often did) sold into the slavery of the actual world.

Even his own little volume—or rather the memory of it—though he attached anything but a high and exaggerated value to it, was worn like a secret talisman about his heart, to charm away the demon of Reality, to whose service he felt himself bound, body and soul.

And it must be observed here, with a view to what I have noted above, that with all his happy art of adapting himself to the circumstances and exigencies of his worldly position, they never ceased to press upon him ; for his power of escaping them was an *art*, not the result of natural temperament ; so that when real trials and troubles came he (alas !) sank beneath them.

The two following letters must be allowed to speak for themselves :—

“ Sept. 10, 1843.

“ MY DEAR PATMORE,—When your note came I had just written to you, stating my

total ignorance of there being a notice in Blackwood. I have since written to Coventry. But it now strikes me that I ought instantly to have replied to one allusion in your letter, though you put no question direct. If you suppose that the person you mention has *directly or indirectly the remotest share* in the attack, the suspicion is flagrantly and monstrously wrong. I will engage to swear that he is as innocent of any the least knowledge of it as you are. There is another person who, as a friend of —, I may suppose you to have in your mind. I can say as much, or almost, for him. You must hunt in a totally opposite quarter. The thing itself I have not allowed myself to see. The last bitter outrage on Procter was my sickener.

“ Ever yours truly,

“ L. B.

“ I do hope you are not allowing it to have more than its natural momentary effect on you. Injury it cannot do, except to your own feelings, which I allow for being ten times stronger of course than if you were ostensibly the person assailed.”

“Sept. 1843.

“DEAR PATMORE,—There is reason to conclude I believe that —— is not the actual writer. Who *is* I have not yet learned, but he will get preciousy slated for his pains. I was with Hunt and Procter last night, whose feelings on the subject are very strong, and —— seems quite indisposed to let the thing pass. I understood that he quite intends to notice it—and is considering how best to do so. —— tells me he means to scarify the wretch—I think, in ‘Punch.’ It has excited great indignation among us all.

“Yours ever,

“With kindest regards to Mrs. Patmore,

“L. BLANCHARD.”

VI.

BLANCHARD'S ADMIRATION OF BYRON, BULWER,
DICKENS, LAMB, TENNYSON, AND PLUMER WARD.

It was beautiful to see, in a man of first-rate ability like Blanchard, that almost religious reverence and admiration for high intellectual faculties in other living men, which (there is no denying it) is a very rare accompaniment of such faculties. It is usually left for ordinary mortals to pay that homage to living genius which is its only appropriate extrinsic reward, but which is almost always withheld from it by those at whose hands it is alone acceptable, until time or death has rendered the tribute of no avail. If, now-a-days, the man of high genius wants the unqualified and undisparaging admiration of those who approach or equal him in intellectual endowments, must die for it. In the mean time, th
with an eye of preternatural keenne
errors and deficiencies; and if, fr

of worldly policy, they do not note his shortcomings to the world, they lay them as a "flattering unction" to their own souls.

Sometimes, indeed (as in the case of Wordsworth), men of high genius, if they duly tutor, direct, and employ their genius, and *live long enough*, come to see the living world stand to them in the light of a Posterity. But what avails it *then*? Does anybody suppose that Wordsworth feels anything but contempt for that species of fame which is now accorded to him so profusely by the very same public, and the same organs of it, that poured contempt and ridicule on him and his pretensions for the first half of his literary life? * And Wordsworth is the one exception to the rule that (in England at least) no great poet, or indeed great writer of any kind, was ever duly appreciated during his life-time, and least of all by those who would be best qualified for the office, and would most fitly and willingly perform it, if they were but his posterity instead of his contemporaries.

* These Recollections were written before Wordsworth's death.

Laman Blanchard, so far from yielding to that vulgar superstition, and that still more vulgar jealousy, which will see no exalted intellectual distinction, and no saving virtue, in any but the dead, suffered his ardent, sympathising, and sincere nature to carry him to the other extreme. Where he found high genius in the living, he not only had a tendency to exaggerate it beyond the legitimate bounds which his own fine critical faculty never failed to detect, but he could scarcely be brought to admit that it was disfigured by any faults, or coupled with any deficiencies. In fact, this was one of the many "amiable weaknesses" of his intellectual character—a weakness, however, which clearly had its root in that intense perception and passionate appreciation of intellectual beauty which was one of his chief points of strength.

Blanchard's literary career commenced at the period when Byron was in his glory, and Wordsworth was slowly advancing towards *his*; and his own little volume was evidently an unconscious and involuntary tribute to his almost idolatrous admiration of these two

rival poets. And Blanchard was not the man to fall from his allegiance because others did so. Accordingly, he was true to the last to his early worship of Byron ; and if latterly he shrank a little from his loyalty to the rival shrine, it was because nine-tenths of the former worshippers of the other had gone over to it. It was during the last few years of his life a service of danger to even hint anything against Byron's pretensions, in the presence of Blanchard. He even seemed almost unconscious of that reaction which has for the moment sunk that poet as much below his true place in our poetical literature as the enthusiasm of his admirers had lifted him above it while living.

But this somewhat exaggerated admiration of Blanchard for intellectual distinction of any kind, was especially conspicuous where personal friendship or liking quickened his eye to the admirable qualities of intellectual character, and blinded it to the accompanying defects. Consequently the sphere of Blanchard's living hero-worship extended very wide—wider, I suspect, than that of any other man with similar powers of intellect

and discrimination ; but the idols who enjoyed, out of sight, the greatest share of that worship were among his personal friends ; and as it so happens that they stand almost as high in the public favour as they did in his, it may be not invidious to name them : they were Sir Bulwer Lytton and Mr. Charles Dickens. Next to these, in prose literature, stood the late Mr. Plumer Ward, and in some particulars even above them. With Mr. Plumer Ward, however, Blanchard was not personally acquainted until about three years before his death, when I had the pleasure of introducing them to each other, to the great satisfaction of both.

I do not believe that Blanchard had paid much attention to Walter Scott—probably from the absorbing nature of his literary occupations at the time that great writer was at the zenith of his fame, and from that vast previous accumulation and rapid subsequent succession of his works which made it impossible for an occupied man to undertake them as a whole. Certain it is that he did not bestow much enthusiasm on that greatest of our modern prose writers.

To Carlyle, Blanchard would have nothing to say, except now and then a pleasant because good-natured joke, at the vagaries of that remarkable writer's remarkable style. And no wonder that such a style was a stumbling-block in the way of one whose own style (especially during the last five or six years of his life) was the perfection of ease and clearness, blended with an elegance and grace that, in him, always contributed to these rather than counteracted them.

Among living poets the only two to whom Blanchard attributed the highest and purest species of poetical power were Wordsworth and Tennyson; though he considered that the author of "Orion" had written separate passages that were at least equal to anything produced by the two poets above-named.

Among the deceased writers of our own day, the only two, with the exception of Byron, in whose personal character Blanchard felt a strong interest, and for whose powers he entertained a high admiration, were Charles Lamb and Hazlitt. Without overlooking the faults of the latter, Blanchard

thought him the greatest critic our literature has ever produced; and for everything that Lamb did he felt that sort of personal fondness which those who knew that exquisite writer intimately were accustomed to transfer to his intellectual and personal character; for, I think, it must have been observed by the friends of Lamb, that, when once they came thoroughly to know *himself*, they cared but little for his writings, which were but poor and diluted droppings of the rich and rare essence of which his mind was composed.

I believe these two exquisite writers never met more than once or twice, and then under circumstances not calculated to lead to a personal intimacy. Nor do I believe that such an intimacy would have been permanently agreeable to either party, if only from the remarkable resemblances between them that I have referred to; for men who have little or no egotism, in the ill sense of the phrase, do not like to find themselves admiring or loving in others qualities which they know and feel themselves to possess: it seems too much like admiring and loving themselves,

which none but the merest egotists, in the poorest and meanest sense of the term, ever do.

If Blanchard's eloquent expression of that unbounded and unmingled admiration which he felt for the above-named writers was calculated to engender the feelings it interpreted, exactly the opposite result was produced when, as was not seldom the case in his conversation on literary and personal topics, he found himself hampered between his fine and strong perception of the truth, and that friendly partiality which prompted him to "see Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." The late unfortunate Miss Landon was one of those friends whom he insisted upon "monstering" in this way ; and in her case there was considerable foundation for the fantastic superstructure that he delighted to build up. On other occasions, when he was holding up to admiration, or defending from attack, the intellectual pretensions of some friend or intimate associate, after abandoning, one by one, every position he took up, and smilingly admitting that they were not tenable, he would end by a half-unconscious,

half-intended, touch of satire. Thus, I remember, after discussing the alleged literary pretensions of one of his personal friends, who had attained great popularity, and abandoning, with a sort of sly half-acquiescence, every one of his grounds of admiration, he finished the controversy by exclaiming, "Well, what I chiefly admire about — is, that physical energy which carries him through everything. And this I *will* say, he grows the most delicious cauliflowers and summer-cabbages I ever tasted!"

VII.

CHANGE IN BLANCHARD'S CHARACTER AND STYLE OF
WRITING.—EXPLANATION OF IT.—HIS LAST
LETTERS TO P. G. PATMORE.

It is something like a set-off—a sorry one, it is true—to the friends of Laman Blanchard, against his premature loss, that, during the last two or three years of his life, the weak points of his character were gaining a sad ascendancy over the fair, for I must not call them the strong ones, and would inevitably have conquered them at last, if he had lived for a few years longer. The truth is, he was fast lapsing, in his writings, from the sweetest and wisest of moralists into a mere satirist—a gentle and tolerant one, but still a satirist; and qualify this latter phrase by what softening epithets we may, there is at best a dreary difference between them.

All that Sir Bulwer Lytton says of Blanchard, in the delightful little memoir prefixed to the reprint of his selected "Essays," is true to the letter, both in a personal and a

literary point of view. But it is not all; or rather, it is true of him up to within a very few years of the premature close of his career, but not of those last few years, probably owing to the writer not having had occasion to watch the object of his remarks during that period.

Certain it is, that for those whose friendship or admiration, - even the two combined, cannot blind them to the faults or failings of their friends, there was latterly an ominous change gradually going on in the mind and spirit of Blanchard, which showed itself in the growing irritability of his temper, and the corresponding acerbity of his writings. The rich and sparkling wine of his spirit was slowly but surely undergoing that "acidulous fermentation" to which all wine is liable under certain predisposing conditions.

Those of Blanchard's mere reading friends and admirers who doubt this, have only to turn to those of his Essays in the New Monthly Magazine that were written during the last three years of his life, many of which are nothing else but satires, more or less bitter or biting, not merely on those social

vices which are always legitimate objects of satire, but on those human weaknesses, and personal humours and habits, which were never yet cured by the *caustic* of satire, and are not seldom aggravated, by its application, into incurable sores or mortifying wounds. Whether or not some of the trenchant personal passages in the Essays to which I allude were *intended* to point at some of his acquaintance I have no means of knowing; but there can be little doubt that many of them were so applied and accepted.

This change was, no doubt, superinduced by the circumstances of Blanchard's life, upon that original softness and sweetness of temperament which, even in a man, while they maintain their normal character, may fairly and fitly be described as *feminine*, without in the smallest degree impeaching the strength or dignity of the intellect they at once elevate and adorn; but which, it must be confessed, are sadly apt, under adverse circumstances, to degenerate into qualities that, in ceasing to be feminine, become *effeminate*.

The truth is, that, during the last three or four years of his life, Blanchard had grown,

in his temper and feelings, as touchy under any supposed slight or neglect as a jealous woman—as peevish and fretful, under any “small misery,” as an ailing child—as much “put out” by any temporary difficulty in his social position or family circumstances, as a May Fair exquisite. And the result of all these on the tone and colour of his writings is impossible to be overlooked by those of his friends who do not wilfully shut their eyes to it.

The explanation of this sinister change is probably to be sought in the physical consequences of nearly twenty years of incessant and wearing literary labour, coupled with the fact of finding himself no better off, in a worldly point of view, than when he began.

It is true that he suddenly and unexpectedly found himself, at the end of this period, the most popular essayist and magazine writer of the day, and, consequently, the most sought after by publishers. But this only increased the evil instead of curing it, since it did not enable, or, at all events, induce him to relax from that mere literary drudgery from which he derived the chief

portion of his income. During the last three or four years of his life, while torn to pieces for those short and terse prose essays, and those light and sparkling verses on the topics of the hour, in which latterly he had no rival, he was at the same time the *working* editor of three different periodicals—one of them a weekly newspaper, which, on account of its high political and literary reputation, as well as the incessant watchfulness and fastidious taste of its proprietor and chief editor, required the utmost care and skill in the getting-up of its subordinate features. And these increased strains upon Blanchard's intellect, and calls upon his time, increased in an equal proportion that crowd of satellites and hangers-on, among minor artists, players, playwrights, &c., who, while they no doubt *liked* his society for itself, *sought* it only for the benefit his good word might do them in a professional point of view.

Thus, with constantly increasing calls upon his thoughts and pen, and constantly diminishing time to answer them, Blanchard became the *enfant gâté* of the periodical press; and his temper and tone of mind

suffered the ordinary consequences of that perilous distinction—even more perilous to “children of a larger growth” than to the smaller; for in the latter the ill consequences often wear out—in the former never.

Some letters of Blanchard have been published by Mr. Ainsworth in the *New Monthly Magazine*, which, for those who knew the writer’s extreme sensitiveness and delicacy of feeling on the matters to which they refer, place in a very painful light the exigencies of a social position that compelled or induced such a man to submit to the literary subservience they imply, and which their publication (inadvertently no doubt) placards to the world. Blanchard was, at the date of these letters, and indeed up to the period of his death, sub-editor of Ainsworth’s *Magazine*, and was in the habit of supplying a certain number of pages to that publication every month; and the letters to which I allude evidently refer to some of his recent contributions, which had as evidently not been approved of by his literary *chef*, who appears to have taken him to task accordingly.

When it is recollected that these letters were written under the pressure of a fearful domestic affliction—which resulted, a few weeks afterwards, not only in the death of the wife who was so dear to him, but in the awful catastrophe of his own death also—there is something inexpressibly painful about them.*

After all, however, it must be confessed that there was in Blanchard's natural temper a morbid sensitiveness to any apparent slight or neglect, which was quite inconsistent with the position he must have felt himself to hold in the estimation of those about whose estimation such a man should alone care. I had observed the existence of this defect from the commencement of my intimacy with him; and I believe it to have arisen (as such defects of temper almost always do), from a sort of half consciousness of, in some degree, meriting the treatment he so disliked.

This requires explanation, and is susceptible of it, so as to remove the smallest

* See New Monthly Magazine, vol. lxxvi. p. 139.

imputation from Blanchard's uniform and universal kindness and considerateness towards not merely his friends and intimates, but the most insignificant or casual of those mere acquaintance with whom his many engagements placed him in contact.

The chief way in which the over-sensitiveness I have alluded to showed itself was this: when he first became acquainted with any one whom he saw reason to like, and who liked him, and in consequence made one at those nightly meetings at his house at Lambeth, which exactly resembled those of Charles Lamb, many years before, at Islington,—if, after being present on two or three evenings during a week or fortnight, the new guest ceased for any noticeable space of time to appear there, Blanchard was hurt and piqued—wondered “what could be the matter,” and was almost offended; though in the meantime he had never even thought of seeking *them*, or at most *only* thought of it. And the man who, for reasons however valid (and there were valid reasons in the case of Blanchard), abstains from according to his friends something of that reciprocity

on which all social intercourse rests, must necessarily be liable in return, and is justly liable, if not to marked neglect, at least to that reserve which self-respect naturally engenders, and even commands, and does so the more surely and fitly in the case of comparatively inferior intellectual and social pretensions. Such men, for instance, as his friends Bulwer and Dickens might have gone to Blanchard's as often as their inclinations led them to seek the enjoyment of his sparkling wit, his gentle and genial wisdom, and his cordial good fellowship, without looking for any external testimony of reciprocal interest in return. But ordinary people could not afford to do this; and the consequence was, that the nightly meetings which took place at Blanchard's house at the time I speak of were, with many occasional and a few habitual exceptions, for the most part composed of those two least agreeable and respectable attendants that wait on intellectual distinction and the power it confers—parasites and satellites.

The two following letters are without date, but were written shortly before Blanchard's

melancholy death, the last of them after his wife's death, and only two or three days before his own. The first, if I remember rightly, refers to an offer I had made him of the use of my house, in the anticipated event of his giving up his own. I quite forget what were the matters alluded to in the second.

“Union Place, Monday.

“MY DEAR PATMORE,—Forgive my delay, occasioned by a cold settled on the lungs, and be sure that, although I was ill, I deeply regretted your going away without seeing me. I would not have permitted it on any account. Now for your note. The proposal is every way kind and generous, and I shall always remember with pleasure that you have made it in so friendly a spirit. *But*, in my particular case, there is a *fatal obstacle*. Not in the house, nor in any of the arrangements we might probably form, agreeably to your views, but in the *next* house. Some members of that family we are very intimate with still. With respect to others, the taking up our abode next door would be an *impossibility*; and though years have passed,

my wife would have an insuperable aversion to the thought, especially in her present state of mind. I cannot write on this subject. Give my kindest remembrances to your family.

“Yours ever,

“LAMAN BLANCHARD.”

“Sunday morning.

“MY DEAR PATMORE,—As the enemy that has laid me so low has now hit at my eyes, the optic nerve being dreadfully affected, I write while I can—too ill I have felt before, but worse now—to say that your note grieved and surprised me. *I keep it by me*; but unless I soon get better, utter helplessness is all you can look for from the interest and attachment of your sick friend.

“Yours, my dear P., sincerely,

“L. B.”

VIII.

EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY.—A LITERARY DINNER.—
 ANECDOTES OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.—
 TABLE-TALK.

I WILL conclude these Recollections of Laman Blanchard by an extract from my Diary, referring to one of those literary dinners of which, when present, he was usually among the most brilliant ornaments. It is true he was not so on this occasion. But I cannot help thinking that the failure marks one of the most amiable and happy features of his character, and which caused him, though decidedly fond of talking, to be still more willing and gratified to listen when the talk was worth the sacrifice.

The only occasion of the above-named kind on which I remember him to have been comparatively silent, without the reason I have ventured to assign for it, was a half-literary, half-aristocratic dinner, at Mr. Plumer Ward's,—a blending together of opposites that rarely answers, except for

those professional diners-out, whose duty and business it is to talk, and not their pleasure, and who therefore (to parody an exquisite line of Gray's)

“*Talk* the more because they talk in vain.”*

On the occasion to which I allude there were two of these intellectual gladiators present, and they kept the arena almost entirely to themselves, to the infinite amusement of everybody else; and the more so that almost the sole aim and object of their talk was to turn each other into ridicule, from opposite ends of the table.

Under the circumstances, Blanchard, I remember, enjoyed himself, and, as I learned afterwards, communicated enjoyment in a *tête-à-tête* with the lady who sat next to him, Mrs. Austen, to whom all the most interesting letters of Mr. Ward on literary topics, cited in Mr. Phipps's memoir of his deceased relative, are addressed.

EXTRACT FROM DIARY.

May 7, 1838.—Dined yesterday at B——'s

* “I weep the more because I weep in vain.”

Sonnet of Gray.

—a *literary* party of ten:—Bell (of the “Atlas”), Jerdan, Blanchard, Leigh Hunt, Robertson (editor of the “Westminster Review”), Villiers, Wallace, a gentleman whose name I did not hear, and myself. Better talk than I have heard for some time,—chiefly, however, indeed almost entirely, from B—— himself and Hunt. B—— related some capital things; among others, two new anecdotes about Wellington, which he had heard from his own lips, a few days before, at a small dinner-party. Both of them related to the friendly feelings and intercourse that subsisted between the English and the French troops in the Peninsula, when they were not engaged in actual combat. One related to Col. Aguilar. Being personally acquainted with some officers of the French regiment which lay in front of his own, he had been invited to dine at their quarters, the two regiments being at the time “observing” each other. Just after dinner, while they were at the height of enjoying themselves, a messenger came from the Duke to Col. Aguilar, to move his men backwards a certain distance, the Duke

having observed that they were placed nearer than he wished to the French regiment; and the messenger of the Duke had been allowed to pass to the Colonel. The message was read by Col. A., and he immediately rose to go; and on being pressed to stay a couple of hours longer, or explain why he could not, he told the French Colonel the nature of the message he had received from the Duke. "Oh," said the French Colonel, 'if that's all, I'll manage that for you. I'll move *my* men back the distance that the Duke requires, and then *yours* will be in their right position." And he did so.

The other anecdote related more immediately to the Duke himself, and is of great interest and importance, as his own life or death was involved in it. He had been persuaded to try a beautiful *white charger*, which he proceeded to do, attended by one person only (an orderly, I think B—said); and, without much thinking where he was riding, he suddenly came right in front of the French piquet, who, seeing the *white charger*, and supposing that it was some one of consequence, and that they were part of a larger

party, instantly raised their guns and pointed at the Duke. "I thought it was all over with me," the Duke said, in relating the anecdote, "but the man who followed me cried out, 'Stop, stop; *ce n'est rien, ce n'est rien*,'—we are not followed by anybody!" The Frenchmen immediately withdrew their guns, "and my life was saved," the Duke added.

B—— then related another story arising out of these military recollections. When he was at Naples, three or four years ago, he was introduced personally to the King, who has not an idea in his head but of *military* matters, and who delights in nothing but in "playing at soldiers." And not supposing that it could be deemed worth while by the people about him to present any foreigners but such as had distinguished themselves in a *military* way, he took it for granted B—— was a military hero, and treated him accordingly. "You are very young, Mr. B——," he said, "were you at Waterloo?" (Mr. B. was about ten years old when Waterloo was fought.) "I do not recollect your name in connexion with any remarkable events

though I hear you have greatly distinguished yourself. Are you fond of reviews?*" I will give you a review, if you like; or, perhaps, you would like yourself to review my troops? I gave your countryman, General Sir Walter Scott, a review when he was here."

On hearing this anecdote, Hunt said, "We've heard of some one who was said to have abused the privilege which his countrymen had of being ugly. This gentleman seems to have abused the privilege which kings have of being ignorant."

B—— said some one (at the party where he met the Duke, whom he described as having been singularly pleasant and communicative) asked him whether he observed anything in the tactics of Napoleon at Waterloo, the only occasion where he had met him, which indicated any of that vast superiority which was attributed to his military talents by many. He said—no, nothing whatever; and he expressed his distinct opinion that Napoleon was a very clever commander, but nothing

* His Majesty, we must suppose, did not mean to pun.

more ; and that his cleverness chiefly consisted in the way in which he availed himself of the peculiar moral and physical qualities of the troops he commanded. He added, that by far the cleverest of the French commanders were Soult and Massena, whom he ranked much above Napoleon, as generals.

The talk after dinner was chiefly *learned*—a great deal too much so to be either amusing or clever. It was begun by —, who dawdled out some question to B— about the mode of pronouncing Greek, by the *modern* Greeks, who seem to *Frenchify* it (so to speak), getting rid of all the richness and grandeur—in other words, all the *mouthings* of it.

In the course of this conversation, Hunt referred to some of the *crotchets* of the Greek and Latin poets, or rather versifiers ; and to one in particular, who wrote a Latin poem, consisting of three hundred lines, *every word of which begins* (for it is extant, I think he said) *with the letter P*. He repeated two or three of the lines. * * *

The talk up-stairs, which formed itself into little committees of three and four, was very

pleasant and gossiping. And, towards the end of the evening, there was an admirable talk between B——, Hunt, and Blanchard (*apropos* to a supposed contemporary portrait of Shakspeare), on the Shakspeare sonnets,—those at least addressed to Lord Southampton. It was chiefly carried on by Hunt, who gave an admirable (but somewhat *alarming*) account of them, with reference to the equivocal expressions in which they abound, under the supposition of their being addressed to a man. B—— seemed to think that there was no defending them on this point; but Hunt got through it with extraordinary eloquence and beauty, both of style, of thought, and of feeling. I never heard him talk nearly so well as he did to-night.

There was also another very interesting discussion, in which he took a leading part, namely, on the character of Lord Bacon—the bad parts of which he defended nobly and beautifully, as did B—— also; he (Hunt), however, contending that Bacon never went beyond the *point* of being able “to justify his deeds unto himself;” whereas B—— held that he stuck at *nothing* to gain

his worldly ends; but that he was anything but a *mean* villain—that he was a *great* one;—great in the good as well as the bad sense of the word.

Hunt started a theory about poetry,—that it was the result of immediate *feeling*, and nothing else; that there was no such thing as a poetry of *thought*. Thought, he said, was merely the *reflection* of feeling—feeling at second hand; and, in illustrating his theory, he went on as follows, giving it as an instance of the poetry of *feeling*:—"One of my boys had been out walking, and on his return he could not get in; for we (meaning all the rest of the family) were out, and the servant, it appeared, was asleep. At last, he got in—[at the window, I suppose, for I did not understand exactly *how*, she being asleep and nobody else at home] and there he found her, as he said, lying asleep on a sofa, crouched up, LOOKING HOT AND FURIOUS." *This* was what he gave as an instance of the poetry of feeling.

Another little incident I had almost forgotten. — and — were expatiating together on the *bust of Dante*, tracing very

learnedly his whole "life and character," in the lines, hollows, and marks of his noble countenance—having been all the time tracing the characteristics of *Dante* in the features of *Ariosto*! The blunder probably occurred from the two busts having lately changed places. They discovered their own mistake in the midst of the discussion, and then quietly moved across to the other bust, and made out the same case in regard to that.

I would have refrained from putting down this little anecdote, if it were not that I look upon it as a very curious and valuable instance of the power of the imagination in cases of this nature. In fact, with a thorough knowledge and an intense perception of *any* human character, you may *fancy* you see the traces of it in almost *any* face.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
AND
THOMAS SHERIDAN.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
AND
THOMAS SHERIDAN.

I.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS AND ANECDOTES OF THE
SHERIDANS.—TOM SHERIDAN WHEN A BOY.—SHE-
RIDAN'S FONDNESS FOR HIS SON.—TOM SHERIDAN
AT CAMBRIDGE.—SHERIDAN'S WONDERFUL POWER
OF APPLICATION ON IMPORTANT OCCASIONS.—A
WIT-CONTEST BETWEEN FATHER AND SON.—SHE-
RIDAN'S PERSONAL VANITY.—EXTRAORDINARY
SCENE AT A FUNERAL.—CHARACTERISTIC ANECDOTE.

As my personal "Recollections" of Sheri-
dan and his celebrated son are confined to
the fact of their having been once pointed
out to me in the street by my father—I being
then a school-boy—it will readily be sup-
posed that I have some special and excep-
tional ground for introducing them into
pages which are in every other instance
devoted only to writers with whom I enjoyed

a personal friendship, or maintained a long literary intimacy or acquaintance. That special ground embraces circumstances of literary interest which, if I am not strangely mistaken in my estimate of them, will be hereafter regarded as among the most remarkable of those which have signalised the lengthened period to which these Recollections refer.

But though I have no reminiscences of my own to offer the reader, of either Richard Brinsley Sheridan or his scarcely less celebrated son "Tom," beyond the fact of my having retained to this day a perfect recollection of their persons at the time I speak of*—of the somewhat bloated and dissipated but still highly intellectual look of the father, and the slight, elegant figure, and finely-cut aristocratic features, of the son—I have some Recollections of both of them before me, that are better worth attention than any I could have hoped to offer, as they were acquired in a way that was open to no other person, and are no less untinged by the par-

* Not long before Sheridan's death, in 1816.

tiality of private friendship, than they are untainted by the ignorant prejudices of envy or partizanship. What follows relating to the personal habits and characters of the two Sheridans forms part of a series of extremely interesting Memorials, that were written for the use of his private friends by Professor Smyth, Fellow of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, but have not been published. Professor Smyth was for several years the tutor of young Sheridan, and during the whole of his engagement in that capacity resided with his pupil in one or other of the houses occupied by Sheridan.

By the bye, there is nothing more characteristic of Sheridan, and his "way of life," than the fact stated by Mr. Smyth at the outset of his little history,—that on his accepting the tutorship of "Tom," as proposed to him by Sheridan, he (Tom) was "running wild" at Sheridan's "seat at Isleworth;" that he (Sheridan) occupied another country house at Wanstead, and a town house in Grosvenor Street; and at neither of these houses "could he

live" (since his wife's death), but actually "*slept every night at Nerot's Hotel!*"

I shall give the remainder of these Memorials of Professor Smyth in his own words, and in the chronological order in which they occur in his unpublished narrative. The scene of the following anecdotes is at the house at Wanstead.

Tom Sheridan as a Boy.—"The son appeared after dinner—a fine youth with sallow complexion and dark hair, with a quick intelligent look and lively manner; but he was impatient to shoot swallows that were seen flitting about the river, and he soon left us."

"Mr. Sheridan came down to us, and the first thing I heard the next morning was a great commotion on the staircase. François, the French valet, was descending with hurried looks and gestures, calling aloud to the housekeeper, who stood at the bottom—'Cut off de kock head, I say—de kock and de hen, I say. My master cannot sleep. They crow, crow, crow. Cut off de head, I say. He order all head cut off.' "

Sheridan's Fondness for his Son Tom.—

Sheridan had been down to Wanstead to see them, and started about eleven o'clock at night for the theatre (nine miles off), as "he must be there that night." It was the depth of winter, and Sheridan had learned that his son had been skating. In about an hour, as Mr. Smyth is going to bed, "I heard" (he says) "a violent ringing at the gate; I was wanted, and what should I see, glaring through the bars, and outshining the lamps of the carriage, but the fine eyes of Sheridan. 'Now, do not laugh at me, Smyth,' he said, 'but I cannot rest or think of anything but this damned ice and this skating, and you must promise me that there shall be no more of it.' * * * * *

" 'Have a glass-case constructed for your son at once,' said Mr. Grey; an observation which Tom used to quote to me with great delight."

Tom Sheridan at Cambridge.—"My pupil went with me to Cambridge, and got out of the way of his aged mother, as Sheridan designated her in one of his notes to him—('Your aged mother sends her blessing to you'). But the results were what alone they

could be—great expense, and the destruction of all my schemes for his instruction. He was the idol of the young men, who pronounced him the cleverest fellow in the place, as in point of fun and humour he certainly was. I no longer saw him in the evenings. I made out how often he had been in Hall by the number of times he had been fined ; for, like his father, he was always too late.

“As a pupil he was from the first a constant source of alternate hope and disappointment—‘equal to all things—for all things unfit.’ To the last he realised what Dr. Parr said of him as a boy—‘great acuteness, excellent understanding, wit and humour, but not a particle of understanding.’”

Sheridan's wonderful Power of Application.

—“A chaise drove to our door (R. B. S.'s house at Wanstead), and out of it stepped Mr. Sheridan, followed by a servant, who continued to bring from out of it as many bundles of papers and red boxes as would have loaded a hand-cart. ‘How I shall ever get through them,’ said Sheridan to me, ‘I know not ; but I must reply to Hastings’ counsel the day after to-morrow, and I must find here my

materials.' 'The day after to-morrow! This day six months, you mean.' 'No, no; I have had them these six weeks in Grosvenor Street already; but you know how I'm plagued morning, noon, and night. Well, Sir, to the charge.' And to the charge he went, never stirring out of his room for four I think, certainly three, days and evenings, and much of the three nights."

Wit-Contest between Father and Son.—
"R. B. S. had a great distaste to anything like metaphysical discussions, whereas Tom had a liking for them. Tom one day tried to discuss with his father the doctrine of Necessity. 'Pray, my good father (said he), did you ever do anything in a state of perfect indifference; without motive, I mean, of some kind or other?' Sheridan, who saw what was coming, and by no means relished such subjects, even from Tom or any one else, said—'Yes, certainly.' 'Indeed,' said Tom. 'Yes, indeed.' 'What! total indifference—total, entire, thorough indifference?' 'Yes—total, entire, thorough indifference.' 'Well, then, my dear father, tell me what it is that you can do with

(mind) total, entire, thorough indifference?' 'Why, listen to you, Tom,' said Sheridan. The rebuff, as Tom told me, so disconcerted him that he had never forgotten it, nor had ever again troubled his father with any of his metaphysics."

Sheridan's Personal Vanity.—The almost childish personal vanity, that was a marked trait in the elder Sheridan's character, has been little, if at all, adverted to by his biographers. Mr. Smyth relates the following singular instances of this weakness:—

"When we were at Bognor Rocks, a party was made to see Chichester. We turned out, ladies, gentlemen, and grooms included, ten or a dozen strong, Sheridan at the head. When we came within a short distance of the town, all of a sudden our leader put his troop into full motion, and we reached the town on a smart canter, making an immense clatter, and with a proper accompaniment of alarmed and barking dogs. The road was paved, full of holes, wretchedly bad, and I was by no means at ease about the safety of my particular person. 'What on earth can be the meaning of all this?' I said to my

pupil, who was cantering by my side. 'Why are we to go on in this ridiculous manner, over such a road as this?' 'Bless me,' said Tom, 'and have you lived with us so long, and do not know my father better than this?' I had to discover that this extraordinary man, at the sallies of whose wit and humour theatres had resounded, and whose eloquence had electrified senates, was now a candidate for the pleasure of making a rattle in the town of Chichester.

"It had been well for Sheridan, if this childish weakness had been confined to paltry exhibitions of this kind; but, with the assistance of his indolence, it went far to ruin him. He must have grooms, horses, houses, like any nobleman in the land; and he never asked himself for a moment how he was to pay for them. I was in Hertford Place with him one day, and I inquired from his confidential servant, Edwards, whether there was a horse for me to ride. 'Horses!' said the poor man, in a sort of paroxysm; 'there are at this moment seven of one kind or another at the livery-stable, and have been there six months, and

I can neither get money from master to pay for their keep, nor an order from him to sell one of them.' ”

Richardson's Funeral.—The following details respecting the funeral of Richardson, one of Sheridan's co-partners in the theatre, would be scarcely credible, if they were not related by a grave professor of a university:—

“Shortly after, S.'s old and bosom friend (and he was a zealot in friendship), poor Richardson, declined and died. It was at some of the usual retiring places near London. S. was to attend the funeral; but, as usual, was too late. When he arrived, the ceremony had been performed, and he had failed in discharging the last sad offices to his friend. The curate was now assailed by such a tempest of grief, expostulations, entreaties, and wretchedness, that the good man had at last no resource but to do what S. was all the time imploring him to do—have the burial-place uncovered, the coffin taken up, and the funeral service once more read, thus to pacify the compunction, and console the feelings of S., who stood weeping and agonising at the grave.

A Letter.—"An incident occurred just as I parted with Mr. S., not a little descriptive of him. 'I wrote you a letter lately,' I said; 'it was an angry one; you will be so good as to think no more of it.' Oh, certainly not,' my dear Smyth,' he said; 'I shall never think of what you have said in it, be assured;' and putting his hand in his pocket, 'Here it is,' he cried, offering it to me. I was glad enough to get hold of it; and, looking at it as I was going to throw it in the fire, lo and behold, I saw that it had never been opened."

II.

HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE SHERIDAN PAPERS.

I now proceed to give, in as few and simple words as I am able to command, a history of what will henceforth be known as The Sheridan Papers.

About two and twenty years ago a valued friend, now deceased, who knew that my studies had been much directed to dramatic literature, placed in my hands several MS. dramas, with the view, if I saw fit on examining them, to their production before the public, either on the stage or otherwise.

The source whence these MS. were stated to have come into my friend's hands, namely, from the actual hands of Richard Brinsley Sheridan himself, and the large sum of money my friend had advanced upon them, were calculated to excite, and, in fact, did excite, considerable interest and curiosity in my mind, as to the nature of these papers; but, as they were merely described to me as

“ Old Plays,” and as my literary avocations at the time were incessant and absorbing, I did but turn over some of the leaves of each, glancing at them only enough to satisfy myself that they were worth careful consideration, and then laid them aside till circumstances should afford me leisure to give them a full examination.

That leisure did not occur till six or seven years afterwards, the MSS. having in the interval lain undisturbed, and almost unthought of, in the case in which they were sent to me. A casual inquiry made by my friend about this time, as to whether I had done or was doing anything about the “ Old Plays,” opportunely reminded me of a matter which precisely fell in with my favourite studies, and I immediately took the MSS. in hand, with the intention of ascertaining whether any of them were suited to the stage, and if so, what alterations and adaptations were required in order to fit them for the audiences of that period, viz.—about 1838.

My first impression on reading the three principal MSS. of which I am now to speak

was one of nothing less than astonishment, at finding that, according to the best of my judgment (which had been uninterruptedly employed for the previous seven years in critically considering and reporting on the acted drama of the day), it would be difficult for the most practised and practical hand to improve these dramas as acting pieces, either in respect of construction or of dialogue: to improve them, I mean, with reference to their specific character and objects respectively—as hereafter to be described and illustrated in these pages.

This impression led me at once to conclude that the dramas of which I am now specially speaking—namely, the three that are alone referred to in the first portion of the following pages—were the productions, severally, of some first-rate hands (for it never for an instant occurred to me that they were all by one and the same hand) of the period to which they belonged—a period that was expressly and distinctly indicated on the very face of one of them, by an assignment of every one of its numerous *dramatis personæ* to well-known actors and

actresses belonging to the latter portion of Sheridan's proprietorship and management of Drury Lane Theatre.

The intrinsic merit and interest of these dramas being thus established in my estimation, it became advisable, before I proceeded further in my investigation as to authorship, &c., to ascertain and settle the important question of whether or not these dramas, or any one of them, had been printed or produced upon the stage. As my friend was not in a condition to give me any positive information on this point, I devoted several entire weeks to consulting every contemporary authority with which I was or am acquainted, but without meeting with any reference to any one of these dramas.

This result of my investigation would, as I conceive, have settled the question as to all these dramas being unacted and unedited, even if the point had not been virtually decided by the fact of the deposit of the MSS. as security for a large sum of money: for though Sheridan did not enjoy a very enviable reputation as to money transactions, it is not for a moment to be supposed that

he would place in the hands of a friend, as adequate security for an important loan, a number of MS. dramas, which, under the supposition of their having been acted, and therefore printed, would have been only so much waste paper, and would certainly have been known to be such by the person to whom they were offered—who was at the time in question an habitual playgoer.

As the literary holiday which had given me leisure to make the investigation above described lasted but a few weeks, I once more laid aside these dramatic MSS., with a greatly augmented impression of their value and interest, and a renewed determination to let slip no favourable opportunity of pursuing my investigations, especially as to their authorship, but still regarding them as “Old Plays” merely—not the remotest glimpse of their real origin having as yet come to me; for I had, at that time, little or no knowledge of autographs, and there was nothing in the shape of what is called “internal evidence,” in either of the three pieces now under consideration, to induce their assignment to any known writer of the

period in question ; while each was so entirely different and distinct from the other two, that nothing would have been more gratuitous than to assign all the three to one and the same hand, merely because each was excellent in its way.

I now approach the discovery of the authorship of these dramas ; a discovery which, as it involves nothing in the shape of merit on my part—indeed it may be regarded as almost purely accidental—I may perhaps be permitted to characterise as one of the most remarkable and interesting in the whole history of modern literature.

Among the MSS. placed at my disposal I found (as if it had got among the others by accident) a single act of Thompson's version of Kotzebue's famous play known to English playgoers as *The Stranger*. This play was put upon the stage by Sheridan and it was well known that before doing so he had carefully prepared and revised it, with a view to the English tastes of that day. By many it was supposed and said that it was entirely translated and prepared by him ; and its extraordinary success, as compared

with its more than questionable merits, except as an *acting* play, encouraged this notion. But it is now well known that Sheridan was almost entirely unacquainted with any modern language but his own. In fact, he had accepted and agreed to produce Thompson's version of Kotzebue's play; and this single act, which had come into my hands with the other MSS., was part of prompter's copy of that version, with the numerous erasures, alterations, and interlineations, evidently in Sheridan's hand—so at least, in the absence of any more positive evidence, I took for granted—partly from the notoriety of the fact that he (Sheridan) had prepared this play for the stage; but chiefly from the marvellous practical skill which at every page of the copy had, by the substitution or addition of a few simple words and phrases, changed, as if by magic, the most helpless twaddle or the most impracticable platitudes into lively and sparkling, or perfectly effective and dramatic dialogue.

This little fragmentary windfall became, apart from its intrinsic interest and curiosity,

quite a study for me in the art of improving style; and having gone through it several times, each time with increasing admiration of the skill displayed and the effect produced, and having thus become quite familiar with this particular phase of Sheridan's handwriting, I, for the first time, applied to "Moore's Life," in order to ascertain what was really known as to Sheridan's share in *The Stranger*.

Though I found in "Moore's Life" little of what I sought, the fac-similes given by him of Sheridan's writing at another period of his life perfected that familiarity with his hand which ultimately led me to the discovery of which I am giving the history. Ultimately, I say, for at the period now referred to I had still no glimpse of that discovery. The MSS. in question, with the exception of the fragment I have just referred to, had for many months been laid aside in favour of more pressing literary avocations; and were quietly awaiting another period of comparative leisure for further inquiry into their authorship. Luckily, as that leisure has never since come till within the last

year or two, the proposed inquiry was not needed: for the first time I casually took up the MS. of one of the dramas I am now speaking of, the one which is in that phase of his hand-writing which belongs to about the same period as the emendations in *The Stranger*, the fact came upon me like a flash of lightning. It is no exaggeration so to describe the effect of my first glance at the autograph in question, after I had grown familiar with its prototype in the copy of *The Stranger*, and the fac-similes in "Moore's Life."

In brief, the point was settled as to this one drama. Not so, however, with regard to the other two, which I did not take up for some months afterwards. What was the exact amount of the interval my recollection does not enable me to say; but when I did take up the other two MSS. respectively, the case became as clear with regard to them as to their companion.

As this all-important point of identity of hand-writing will not and ought not to rest on *my* impressions of the matter—especially on impressions so gathered—and as it is

capable of being tested by numerous living witnesses, I shall say no more upon it at present, except that I have myself tested it by every means and medium that have presented themselves—including, besides the comparison of numerous private letters in the possession of personal friends of my own and others, the direct testimony of several individuals personally or professionally connected with Sheridan up to the period of his death, and whose decision must be deemed conclusive on the point. In fact, no shade of doubt has been thrown on the question of hand-writing by any one of the persons who have seen these MSS., and are competent to speak on the point.

III.

THE SHERIDAN PAPERS.—DETAILED DESCRIPTION
OF THEM.

BEFORE proceeding to give a description of the three dramas above referred to, and specimens of their several styles and characters respectively, it may be well for me to say a few words as to the question of what is called "internal evidence," as applying to their authenticity. Not, I imagine, that it will for a moment be contended that, in the present case, any *such* evidence is needed; or, even that, where existing, it strengthens the proofs—the almost self-evident proofs—that are forthcoming in the present instance. The identity of the handwriting on which the authenticity rests being beyond the reach of question or cavil, there would, evidently, be something absurd upon the face of it, in supposing that a manuscript drama, entirely the autograph of a man in Sheridan's position as regards the dramatic

world at the period now in question, should be the production of any one but himself; and the absurdity becomes almost too glaring for statement, when we suppose (as is the case in the present instance), that the said MS. is covered with many hundreds of alterations, additions, erasures, private notifications, &c., every one of which is in the same hand.

Again; to suppose (as is the case of another of these manuscripts), that Sheridan should take up a MS. of great length (one hundred and twenty closely-written foolscap pages), in the handwriting of an ignorant copyist, but with many hundreds of *blank spaces* left in it, of all lengths, from the space of a single word to that of several lines, and should fill in every one of these blanks with his own hand, together with many hundreds of corrections, additions, &c., and that he should find time and inclination to do all this at a period of his life (as indicated by several features of the MS.), when he was manager of a great theatre, a member of the House of Commons, in almost daily intercourse with the heir

apparent to the throne, and one of the "observed of all observers" in the society in which he moved,—that he should, I say, do this in the case of any one's production but his own, is a supposition simply absurd.

Lastly; in regard to the third and most remarkable of all these remarkable works. Though the handwriting of the first rough copy belongs evidently to an early period of Sheridan's life, in this case, as in all the others, numerous and elaborate corrections, alterations, interlineations, &c., are in the ordinary and unmistakable hand of Sheridan; and to one of the songs which form so remarkable a feature of this drama (that song itself being in the earlier hand), is appended a foot-note in the later hand of Sheridan, *written in the first person*, and sportively addressed to some friend, in whose hands he was, probably, about to place the drama for business purposes, after this his latest revision of it.* The following is a copy of that note:—

"We will now show them that we can

* That person, I have no doubt, was his favourite son "Tom," who was, at the period in question, the "reader" and literary manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

make words stand alone as well as the best of them. *This I call my noun-substantive song.*"

The allusion is evidently to the famous song in *Midas*, beginning "Round about the Maypole," &c., of which many of the lines consist of *single words*,—as they do in the case of the song above referred to.

Byron said of Sheridan, with little, if any exaggeration, that whatever he (Sheridan) had set himself seriously to do, he had done better than it was ever done before or since; that he had produced the best existing comedy, *The School for Scandal*; the best comic opera, *The Duenna*; the best melodrama, *Pizarro*; the best farce, *The Critic*; and the best parliamentary oration, *The Begum Speech*. It may be safely added, that nothing so good in their way as any one of these things has been done since the above was said of them; and I confidently believe that, to complete the triumph of Sheridan's dramatic genius, it will hereafter be admitted, by all persons competent to decide the point, that the same may be said of the three dramas now to be introduced to public notice, that no other English writer has produced

so good a Fairy Opera, so admirable a Burlesque, and so perfect a little Piece of Action and Incident.

Having (so at least, I trust) set the question of authenticity beyond the reach of doubt or cavil, I proceed to give a brief descriptive notice of each of these remarkable Curiosities of Dramatic Literature ; illustrating my descriptions by specimens of the execution of each drama ; but avoiding, so far as I conveniently can, all comments or opinions of my own.

IV.

THE SHERIDAN PAPERS (*continued*).—A BURLESQUE BY
E. B. SHERIDAN.

I SHALL describe these dramas in the order in which, both from the handwriting and from internal evidence, they seem to have been written.

At present the burlesque burletta (as it is called) of *Midas* stands alone in our dramatic literature; for though the *Tom Thumb* of Fielding, the *Bombastes Furioso*, and even the pleasant and elegant extravaganzas of Planché, and the inelegant and *un-pleasant* ones of other people, may be said to belong to the same family, they have scarcely any characteristic features in common with the glorious old original of the uproarious Irish humourist, Kane O'Hara. But should the extraordinary drama now to be partially introduced to the reader ever see the light in its entirety, it will certainly offer no exception to Byron's saying about the supremacy of Sheridan over all other men in all that he

had ever seriously set himself to do. *Midas* will retain, or rather it will claim, the new merit of having been the prototype of Ixion; but the scholar (as is the case in so many other instances in all the arts) will be found to have fairly eclipsed the master.

And this leads me to remark of Sheridan's genius (if indeed genius can be predicated in such a case), that it was not what is called an "original" one; that is to say, he has in no case done anything for which there was not a previous model existing. Yet he unquestionably fulfilled the main condition of genius—that of doing what no other man had previously done or could have done. Whether (*Midas* notwithstanding) this will be admitted of him by those who shall hereafter read *Ixion*, remains to be seen. In the meantime, as genius is as perfectly indicated in small things as in great ones, the critical reader is asked to say whether anything short of original genius could have produced the following couplets, which form one of a score of similar effusions in the remarkable work about to be described in detail. They consist of a duet between *Mercury* and *Nubilis*

(the waiting-maid of *Juno*), between whom certain love-passages are going on, subservient to Ixion's flirtation with the Queen of Heaven, during the absence on earth (with similar designs) of her mighty lord and master. The lovers have had a little tiff, in consequence of some jealous suspicions on the part of the lady, and this duet signalises their reconciliation :

"DUET.

MERCURY AND NUBILIS.

Merc. The sun at Tyburn shall be hung—

Nub. The man i' th' moon grow sick—

Merc. The stars like bugles shall be strung—

Both. Ere I my sweetheart trick.

Nub. The ox shall carve the butcher up—

Merc. The whitebait eat the trout;—

Nub. And sparrows spawn, and fishes pup,—

Both. Ere we will once fall out."

If there is anything else in our language, within the same compass, that, for perfect originality of conception, startling strangeness of imagery, and breadth of humorous comicality, equals this, I have not met with it in a pretty extensive reading of such matters.

As will be guessed from what has been said in introducing the above verses, this piece turns on the well-known propensity of the Father of the Gods to occasionally disport himself (in flirtations and something worse) among the mere flesh-and-blood divinities of earth; and the fact (which had better be stated plainly at the outset) that it contains not a few passages, not merely of equivocal morality, but disfigured by a coarseness of expression not at present tolerated by "ears polite," would alone be sufficient to prove that it belongs to a very early period of Sheridan's literary career; for all his other works—even those which must have been written before he was one-and-twenty—are remarkably free from any offence in either of these particulars, and his great works—the two comedies—most so of all.* The charac-

* Whether, in "stripping vice of its coarseness," and thus "depriving it of half its deformity," Sheridan diminished either its prevalence or its danger, may be doubted. As a matter of *taste* merely, the school of dramatic writing to which the "School for Scandal" belongs, and of which it is incomparably the best specimen, was a vast improvement on that which preceded it. But those who are old enough to remember the atrocious system of

teristics that I have here noted will also be amply sufficient to account for this piece never having been brought upon the stage; for they are so inextricably interwoven with the structure of the work as to defy excision.

· inuendo and *double-entendre* which marked so profusely all the successful specimens of the later era of that school, will scarcely dispute that, of the two, the open profligacy of Congreve and Wycherley was less dangerous to the social morality of the times respectively, and even less offensive to their good taste: for the brilliant seductions of the one might be guarded against or avoided; but the insidious approach and blighting influence of the other were more or less fatal wherever they penetrated.

V.

THE SHERIDAN PAPERS (*continued*).—EXTRACTS FROM
A BURLESQUE BURLETTA, BY R. B. SHERIDAN.

THE drama of “IXION” opens in a “parlour” in the palace of Jupiter, on Mount Olympus, the persons present being *Jupiter*, with *Mercury* in attendance, at a respectful distance. Jupiter opens the scene with a song, which, like almost every passage of this singular composition, conveys practical lessons on the *savoir vivre* that are certainly not the less instructive for the fun in which they are clothed. It also lets us at once into the gist of what is to follow:—

“SONG BY JUPITER.

“Of state intrigues, and feuds, and leagues,
The fuss and worry is hard;
Dominion cuts me to the guts,
And frets my very gizzard.
On earth they quaff, live, love, and laugh,
Without this rout and pother;
So I'll lay by my bolts, and try
A little of one with t'other.

“Early and late, my hopeful mate,
With nuptial din does fright one ;
We rate and swear—fight dog, fight bear ;
She snaps enough to bite one.
If I’ll submit to her, a chit,
I’ll make a maid o’ my mother.
With earth’s kind fair I’ll try my share ;
A little of one with t’other.”

In pursuance of the resolution thus announced, Jupiter calls Mercury forward, and dispatches him at once to earth, for the purpose of stealing a suit of Amphitryon’s regimentals, that distinguished captain being absent in command of his sovereign’s army, and Jove having already concerted with Mercury a visit to Alcmena in the guise of her liege lord. Jove concludes his directions as follows :—

“ When you’ve the clothes in limbo—d’ye mind me ?
At our old rendezvous on earth you’ll find me.”

He does not indicate the exact locality of this rendezvous ; but it was doubtless either the “ Cyder Cellar” or “ Coal Hole,” or some similar establishment, of the Simpson of Mycenæ, where the palace of Amphitryon was situated.

Mercury having departed on his errand,

Jupiter, in the exuberant jollity of his heart at the pleasures that await him, indulges somewhat too vociferously in his anti-connu-bial anticipations, especially in the *moral* with which his godship always contrives to "justify his deeds unto himself," and which moral is, in this instance, overheard by the good lady to whom it so irreverently relates.

This *contretemps* gives rise to a scene than which the "Doctors' Commons" to which the lady threatens to appeal never witnessed anything more characteristic of that particular phase of "*double-blessedness*" of which it is the appointed guardian. With the exception of about a dozen lines, the whole of this scene is conducted in the characteristic form of a *duet*—a duet of discords; at the close of which the singers make their exit in different directions, and *Ixion*, the hero of the piece, enters.

Ixion is a prophetic anticipation of the "fast young man" of our own day, or rather, he is "three gentlemen in one:" the "fast man," the "gent," and the cockney; a happy combination of conceit, vulgarity, and gullibility, expressing themselves alternately in

slang, super-finery, bad English, and bastard French.

Ixion has come to make a morning call on Juno, and overhearing the conclusion of the quarrel that has been described above, thinks it presents a good occasion for one of those *bonnes fortunes* which such gentry as he represents are ever affecting. But the singular anticipations noticed above are not the only ones belonging to this character. He is an antetype of Brother Jonathan himself, and in a diction that has hitherto been thought to be exclusively of Yankee invention. Here is an example. While considering how he shall prosecute his ambitious design of making love to the Queen of Heaven, he gets a sight of himself in a mirror.

“Let’s see—my face?—toll loll! I’ll work upon her.
My person?—Oh—immense—upon my honour.
My eyes? Oh fie!—the naughty glass—it flatters.
Courage! Ixion *flogs the world to tatters!*”

The scene now changes to a servants’ hall in the same palace, and Mercury is discovered taking a quiet carouse by himself, preparatory to starting for earth on Jove’s errand, as before described. The porter-pot by his side

seems to have furnished the inspiration of the following effusion :—

“Jove may live as he likes—rant, hector, and swear,
With his bolts shake Olympus and Pindus ;
Juno drives him about with a flea in his ear,
And flings the whole house out of windows.

“He sneaks like a dog that has burnt off his tail,
After all his parading and boasting ;
While she jobs like a fish-wife, and sooner than fail,
Will threaten her lord a rib-roasting.

“Now I’ve my full swing ; care for no one a jot ;
No wife with night-lectures to dun me ;
I snap up my luncheon, and quaff off my pot ;
And the black ox ne’er sets his foot on me.”

Nubilis, Juno’s waiting-maid, enters at the conclusion of this song, and, on learning that her lover is about to depart for Earth, a scene of recrimination ensues, which, after a little cajolery on the part of the gentleman, closes happily with the extraordinary duet that has been given at the opening of this description : “The Sun at Tyburn,” &c.

The next scene, which has wonderful spirit and humour, takes place in the dressing-room of Juno, into which Ixion impudently forces his way, in pursuance of the design announced in the scene preceding that just described.

It appears, however, that the flirtation had, in fact, commenced on the preceding evening, when they had taken a quiet stroll together, and been caught in the rain, the sinister result of which accident the lady describes in a couplet that is itself indescribable:—

“My body politic’s quite out of tune—

Indeed *I scarce can speak without a spoon.*”

This scene closes with an assignation on the part of the lady to meet Ixion after dark in the painted gallery of the palace. We are led to understand, however, that she intends to have the grace to substitute for her own celestial person that of Nubilis, her maid. But we are also led to doubt whether she would have felt it necessary to practise this *ruse*, if she had not discovered, in the course of their last interview, that the gentleman is anything *but* a gentleman.

This scene closes the first act.

The second act opens on Earth, at the palace of Amphitryon. Jupiter, under the guise of Amphitryon, is sitting with Alcmena, and they are surrounded by a body of Amphitryon’s friends and retainers, who form a chorus after the fashion of the ancient

Greek drama, and hail the return of their supposed leader from the wars.

Jupiter finds all this fêting somewhat slow work, especially as he has not dined since his arrival on earth. He therefore dismisses all his admirers with an invitation to a jolly carouse to-morrow, himself crying, "Hey for the pantry!" while Alcmena retires to her dressing-room, to await his coming and quarrel with her maid, who seems to have some inkling of the new arrival not being exactly "*le vrai Amphitryon*"—a notion which the lady utterly discountenances. It is true, she admits that "My husband's face is somewhat out at elbows;" but this, she insists, is no concern of the *suivante's*; and the latter, having the wit to see that the case is one in which it is not safe to be too sharp-sighted, all goes well again.

In the meantime Jupiter, having satisfied those vulgar cravings which the atmosphere of Earth seems to have imposed on him, is in the act of congratulating himself on the brilliant success of his enterprise, when a little *contretemps*, occurs, which gives a new face to the affair. As this scene may be detached

without injury to its completeness, I will give it entire, as a specimen of the *dramatic* character of this remarkable production.

“SCENE—A PARLOUR.—JUPITER *discovered, having just finished eating. The Servants, coming in to remove the things, overhear the last part of his song, which JUPITER, not observing them, still keeps singing.*

JUPITER (*sings*).

Now I've humbugg'd the whole house,—
Now I'm snug settled within,
Need I regard it a louse,
My wife going mad with the spleen?

She may accuse me, abuse me;
Her words are idle I promise 'em;
Here will I flaunt it and rant it,
And keep the gentleman from his home.
For the lady I'm ready, and she's all the quarry that
I try on:
I shall be happy to cap ye with horns, good Master
Amphitryon.

Both SERVANTS.

A bite! a bite!

1st SERVANT.

Let's seize him.

2nd SERVANT.

No. 'T were unstable
Without authority;—lets get a constable.
We'll teach him how to quibble and to quirk.

JUPITER (*aside*).

So—here's a pretty job of journey-work !

2nd SERVANT.

T' insult us here before his plot was riper !

A hang-gallows ! I'll make him pay the piper !

DUET (*by the two Servants*).

1st Serv. Zooks ! d'ye take us both for asses,
Not to see your scurvy sham ?

2nd Serv. Doctor, here your tricks won't pass us ;
We're too knowing for a flam.

1st Serv. Never think to get the upper
Hand of us by hook or crook.

2nd Serv. With a salt eel for your supper,
We'll dismiss you, knavish rook.

1st Serv. Scarce my fingers can I keep in—
They so itch to rub him down.

2nd Serv. Oh ! the dog shall pay for peeping.
How I'd like to crack his crown !

1st Serv. So the rake-shame here was willing
To be sowing his wild oats !

2nd Serv. Burn me, not for twenty shilling
I'd be taken in his coats.

1st SERVANT to JUPITER.

Nay—don't stand winking there all day, and beck'ning—
You're out, and that most widely, in your reck'ning.

2nd SERVANT.

No mercy to such horrid crimes we may grant ;
Down on your marrowbones, you sturdy vagrant.

1st SERVANT.

Come, sir, dispatch—we wait for your confessions :
We'll have you 'dicted for a witch, at sessions.

JUPITER.

Peace there, ye ragamuffins!—hold your gabble—
You skipper-nells—you scummings of the rabble!

SONG.

You dogs, I'm Jupiter imperial,
King, emperor, and pope ethereal ;
Master o' th' ordnance in the sky ;—
Famous for hurling bolts of thunder.
Bastards ! I'll make ye both knock under,
Or know the reason why.

D'ye think your blust'ring puffs and vapours
Can browbeat me, ye whipper-snappers ?
I'll soon make ye cry 'cavi!—Zouns !
Make the least mutt'ring, growling, or fuss,
You both to rats I'll metamorphose,
Or shake you to half-crowns.

1st SERVANT.

Great Sir, your royal word there is no doubting—
Oh—mercy ! mercy !—sure my tail is sprouting !

2nd SERVANT.

Tremendous Jove !—I own your bolts and quality—
Oh—I abhor the thought of bestiality.*

DUET (*by the two Servants, kneeling*).

Both. { O forgive us for rebelling!
 { Pardon ! pardon ! cloud-compelling !

i. e., of being turned into rats.

- 1st Serv.* By our weight of passion loaded,
Little did we smoke your godhead.
- 2nd Serv.* Blinded by our senses awkward,
In our baisemains we were backward.
- Both.* { All you ask, we'll serve you well in—
Pardon! pardon! cloud-compelling!

JUPITER.

Rise, suppliant sinners, rise—and for the future
How to behave, ourself will be your tutor.
As god we will reverse what we as man did :
We were to blame in coming empty-handed.
Now to our party firmly to convert ye—
Behold!—for each of ye a six-and-thirty—
Here—as an earnest that our godship by no
Foul means will trick you—pocket up the rhino.

BOTH (*singing as before*).

All you ask, we'll serve you well in—
Bounteous—bounteous—cloud-compelling!

JUPITER.

Know that ourself both like Alcmena well,
And here design awhile to take a spell.
If your assistance back our royal counsel,
Trust me, Amphytrion shall not pass the groudncill.
Stickle but you with might and main to aid us—
A fig for all his blust' rings and bravadoes.
For instance—should he sneak in here upon us,
And be for domineering in—his own house—
Seem you to take his part—but make his chin go
From night to morn with bumbo, flip, and stingo.
You know, altho' his head is weak by nature,

He loves a cheering cup of the good creature.
So mind your eye, and by contrivance handy,
Give him this powder, in a dram of brandy.

(*Gives a paper.*)

Here's his quietus, you but ply him close—
He'll make no bones on't—gulp—and down it goes.
He'll snore, I'll warrant him, with this in's pate,
A fortnight, without stopping once to bait.

BOTH SERVANTS (*singing*).

All you ask, we'll serve you well in—
Mighty, mighty, cloud-compelling !

JUPITER.

I thank you, bucks—I thank you—not to mention
For *you* a peerage, and for *you* a pension.

TRIO.*

JUPITER. Now I'm out of doubt my plan will do.

You

Two

Standing to me true.

To 1st Ser. { I will.
 { You will ?

To 2nd Ser. You man, too, will.

Both Servs. Sir, we'll stick as firm to you as glue.

JUPITER. Poor Amphitryon's forehead ; how 'twill
ache—

Quake,

Shake,

With the horns I'll make !

* This is the trio to which the author affixes the private note alluded to at p. 279, viz.,—"This I call my noun-substantive song."

1st Ser. Chouse him—

2nd Ser. Douse him—

Both. Sir, we'll souse him.

All three } All in the common cause our measures
taking hands. } to take. [*Exeunt.*"]

The next scene is occupied with the sudden return of the *vrai* Amphitryon, and the as sudden evasion of the supposititious one—who fairly runs for it, followed by his victim in full cry. As, however, the imperial intruder cannot stomach the injurious imputations implied in “Stop thief!” “Jail bird!” and the like, which the true Amphitryon flings after him, he turns on his pursuer, trips up his heels, and leaves him bellowing on the ground—where he literally “sings out” his grievances till his own servants come to his aid. But as they are now (as we know) in the pay of Jupiter, their advent does not mend the matter for Amphitryon; on the contrary, their master’s helpless condition affords them a good opportunity of administering the houcussing potion entrusted to them in the preceding scene; and the poor gentleman is carried off, still singing his doleful ditty.

Meanwhile, Jupiter returns to the side scene, to watch what is going on; and Alcmena, alarmed by the cries of her husband, arrives at the spot, only again to be deceived into the belief that Jupiter is her legitimate lord and master, and that the hubbub she had heard was nothing but a chance rencontre between himself and some "sorry fellow" who had obtruded on his privacy. The lady is easily reassured; though her alarm has (as she eloquently describes it) made her feel "light-headed quite in all her limbs;" and the second act concludes by their walking off together, to set all right over a dish of coffee.

I am sorely tempted to enrich my pages by some further extracts from this capital production; but I stay my hand, on the consideration that, in doing so, I should be treating unfairly a drama that may, at no distant period, see the light in its integrity.

VI.

THE SHERIDAN PAPERS (*continued*).—DESCRIPTION OF
A FAIRY OPERA BY R. B. SHERIDAN, WITH
EXTRACTS.

I now proceed to notice that one of these three dramas which I conceive to be the next in the chronological order of its composition. It is a full opera in three acts, without title, but in all other respects complete in all its parts—even, it may be said, to the music of its numerous songs and concerted pieces, which are expressly written to melodies by the most popular Italian composers of the day and of that preceding it—Cimarosa, Portogallo, Paessielo, Guglielmi, &c. It belongs to the class of drama of which the “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*” may be described as the head and origin; with this qualification, however, that it is in all senses of the term an opera; and although in affluence of poetic beauty, and in depth and breadth of comic humour, the “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*” excels this opera, as it does

all other productions of its class, in a degree that does not admit of comparison, yet, as an acting piece, and in the skilful construction of fable and development of character, the opera I am now to notice is not second even to its exquisite and unequalled prototype—for such Shakspeare's romantic Dream unquestionably is to this opera—the supernatural machinery of the two being identical.

The scenes of this opera are laid at the Court of King Arthur, at Carlisle, and in the adjoining forest; and its principal male personages are two Knights of the Round Table, who have preceded Arthur on his return from the wars with the Saxons, where his arms have been triumphant.

Perhaps I cannot more briefly convey to the reader an intelligible notion of the nature and objects of this piece, and the characters delineated in it, than by copying the *catalogue raisonnée* of its *dramatis personæ*, as given in the first page of the MS.

Dramatis Personæ.

EDWIN—in love with Editha—gentle, brave, and good; but hump-backed, and melancholy from doubt of success. Rivalled by Sir Topaz.

SIR TOPAZ—very handsome, but intolerably vain and lying.

SIR REGINALD—an old knight—pompous, mysterious, and full of importance.

SEWARD—an old, bustling, blundering steward.

GUY—Servant to Edwin—much attached to him, and in love with Bertha; but warm, passionate, and jealous.

GREGORY—Servant to Sir Topaz—lying, bragging, and cowardly.

DAMIAN—a Minstrel.

EDITHA—Niece to King Arthur, who is in the wars with the Saxons.

BLANCHE—her friend, related to and in the interest of Sir Topaz.

BERTHA—Maid to Editha—coquettish, but really in love with Guy, though flirting with Gregory.

Attendants, Minstrels, Pages, &c., &c.

Fairies.

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| OBERON—jealous of Mab. | WILL-O'-THE-WISP. |
| MAB. | PEASE-BLOSSOM. |
| MABLE—their Daughter. | MAY FLOWER. |
| ROBIN GOODFELLOW. | TRAIN OF FAIRIES. |

The working out of the plot, which is full of dramatic interest, is effected chiefly by the agency of the Fairies, Oberon, Mab, and their troop—who, of course, befriend the

good and noble Edwin, and confound the machinations of his vainglorious and unworthy rival. The latter portion of the piece assumes a highly poetical character, and is written (the dialogue portion of it) in blank verse, that will bear comparison with any of less remote date than the Elizabethan era; while the whole business assigned to the inferior Fairies is conducted in rhymed verse, of great musical capabilities.

All the characters in this drama are discriminated with truth and delicacy; indeed, with infinitely more of these qualities than is usually thought necessary to works of this nature; so that there would really be little or no exaggeration in predicating of its dialogue throughout what there *was* gross exaggeration in predicating of writings so subtle and profound as those of Shakspeare—namely, that the speeches might in every case be assigned to their owners respectively, in the absence of the usual prefix of their names. The habitual melancholy and misgiving of the noble and delicate-minded Sir Edwin—first under the impression that the

lady of his love does not and cannot reciprocate the passion of one so little favoured by nature, and afterwards from the still more painful reluctance to owing her favour (even if he should obtain it—which he doubts) to the merely personal change wrought in him by the Fairies—is as touching as it is true to nature and to art. In like manner, the love of the Lady Editha, more than half unknown to herself, for the timid and retiring manners and ungainly form of Edwin, is given with unfailing truth and tact.

The other characters, though all of a secondary order, are every one of them discriminated with corresponding truth and individuality; and in the comic characters of the piece there occur numerous touches that at once indicate the hand of Sheridan. For instance—who but he—who of that day, I mean—could have put what follows into the mouth of an impudent and self-sufficient serving-man, whose malicious temper makes him more than half pleased at the transformation of his late handsome master into a lump of personal deformity. After the magical change has taken place, the two are

concerting together new and unworthy plans to counteract its effects on the lady—when the breaking day announces the necessity of their separation.

“I’ve heard folks stirring in the castle this half-hour,” cries the Esquire; “and see—*the sun beginning to rise behind the summit of your honour’s back!*”

Again, the same person, after vapouring to himself about his valour in the field and his conquests over the fair, suddenly stops short with—“But stay, I think I’m taking myself for my master.”

Again, the old, muddle-headed steward, who knew of no merit in nature but that of “being in time,” on witnessing the *dénouement* of the exchanged Knights and exchanged letters, candidly admits that he can neither make head nor tail of it all. “Here’s one letter,” he says, “and that’s not it; and another, and that *is* it; and a man who is not the man he seems, and another who seems him, but is himself;—*in short, I’m only glad we were ready in time.*”

That portion of the opera which is written

for and *to* previously prepared music is, as may be imagined, of little literary or poetic value; but the blank verse of the Fairy portion of the piece is greatly superior to what might have been expected, even from the high reputation which Sheridan enjoyed in his own day as a writer of elegant and graceful verses. Here is an average specimen of it; also of the Fairy songs which accompany the movements of Oberon and Mab whenever they appear. It is the opening of the Fairy portion of the opera; the scene, a moonlit forest, in the neighbourhood of King Arthur's palace. Sir Edwin is wandering pensively, attended by his Esquire, when he fancies he hears music in the air. Then

“Enter OBERON, MAB, and a train of Fairies.

Welcome, sweet Mab! yon moon, whose silver beam
Glides on the lake, proclaims the hour of revel.
Ten thousand glow-worms light us to our games,
And, ling’ring from the day, the dewy grass
Retains its fragrance. Hither fays and elves,
And sprites that throughout daylight hang aloof,
To gambol mortal man, our feast prepare,
And give us music.

*After OBERON’S speech, each Fairy sings, and is joined
by others in chorus, and all dance round.*

SONG.

Come every elf and every fay
And every wandering sprite,
* the day,
Yet merry comes the night.

CHORUS.

Whilst we press the dewy grass,
Whilst we quaff the acorn glass,
Fairy circlets whilst we dance,
Let no mortal step advance.

FIRST FAIRY.

If through the morn some lucky prank
Our elfin tribe attains,
Our king is sure at night to thank
And pay him for his pains.

CHORUS.

Whilst we press, &c.

SECOND FAIRY.

If cross the housewife and unkind,
We sour her butter, too ;
But still the pretty maid shall find
A tester in her shoe.

CHORUS.

Whilst we press, &c.

SECOND FAIRY.

The lazy lout, of form uncouth,
With head-ache sore we trim ;
But mirth shall crown the jolly youth,
And sparkle on his brim.

CHORUS.

Whilst we press, &c.

* So left in original MS.

FIRST FAIRY.

We plunge below, we flutter high,
Till 'minished to a speck,
And round their welkin quick we fly,
Obedient to thy beck.

OBERON.

Silence!—break we off!

I hear th' encroaching step of man. I'll strait
Arraign him, and, if aught of fraud appear,
My dainty elves shall dextrously torment him.
Sweet Mab, retire.

MAB.

Nay—prithee let me stay.
I fain would see the sports, and view th' intruders.

OBERON.

O woman, woman! Curious, vain, and changing!
I know thee well. I've oft observed thee, Mab,
In merry Carlisle, at King Arthur's jousts,
Guiding the spear of many a comely knight.

MAB.

Yes, fickle Oberon, I've marked thee too,
When wont to hie thee to King Arthur's court—
To hover in the presence of his Queen—
Curling in wanton ringlets and devices
Fresh-woven garlands for her ivory brow," &c.

In point of what are technically called
“incident” and “situation,” those indis-
pensable requirements of the modern acting
drama, this opera is at least as strongly
marked as it is in character and general con-

struction ; and if merit and value are to be measured (as I suppose they are) by the amount of passionate interest that they include or suggest, there is one situation in this piece—that one by which the *dénouement* is more immediately brought on—that is not surpassed by anything else of its kind in the whole circle of our acting drama. In order that this fine situation may be understood by the reader, I must explain that the machinations of the base knight, Sir Topaz, and his Esquire, have succeeded in substituting his own name for that of Sir Edwin, in a letter dispatched by King Arthur, and commanding the immediate union of his niece, the Lady Editha, with Sir Edwin, who, as the King declares, in addition to other manifold services performed during the wars, saved his (the King's) life, at the imminent peril of his own. Arthur's letter, however, provides that, in the event of his niece feeling any repugnance to this union, she is at liberty to submit the question of her hand to the decision of a single combat between the rivals. On this letter with the falsified name being read, Editha

eagerly demands the alternative of the combat, being confident that the prowess and valour of Edwin (whom she secretly loves), added to his other noble qualities, will insure a decision in his favour. In the meantime, the Fairy King, Oberon, having, during one of his night revels in the forest, become acquainted with the respective characters of the Knights, has changed their persons,—so far at least as the removal of Sir Edwin's deformities to the shoulders of Sir Topaz; but this transformation is entirely unknown to anybody but themselves and their two Esquires, and Sir Edwin nobly refuses to take advantage of it with his mistress.

Under these circumstances it is that the combat takes place, after the fashion of the time, and in the presence of the whole Court and people, the Lady Editha occupying the sovereign seat, in the absence of her royal kinsman.

The combat proceeds until it is evidently on the point of being terminated by the discomfiture and death of the deformed Knight—still, of course, supposed to be Edwin. At

this point, however, the long-suppressed love of Editha assumes the mastery over all other considerations. As sovereign lady, she commands the combat instantly to cease; descends into the arena; declares her inability to fulfil the conditions of the combat by marrying the (supposed) conqueror; and openly avows her affection for the (as she supposes) discomfited Sir Edwin, and her determination to wed him only. The vizors of the two Knights are then lifted, and the disclosure takes place.

The moral elements and results of this noble situation; the love of woman, virtuously fixed, and, therefore, victorious over all other considerations; the triumphant happiness of the lover, assured of his love's requital, in spite of (seeming) discomfiture, disgrace, and personal deformity; the exposure, defeat, and punishment of baseness; and, finally, the surprise and joy of the assembled multitude, of whom the Lady Editha is the pride and idol;—all these accumulate round this *dénouement* an amount of passionate interest that lifts it into high poetry, without removing it from that

popular appreciation, to which all stage performances are bound to appeal.

The half-fabulous times in which the scenes of this beautiful drama are laid; the romantic character of its incidents; the popular machinery by which the plot is worked out; the remarkable skill and dramatic tact displayed in its construction; and the singular scope that is afforded for the introduction of scenic and artistic effects; place this opera above anything else of its kind that I am acquainted with, as regards its capabilities for stage representation.

Finally,—the *cast* of the characters, as affixed to the list of *dramatis personæ*, in Sheridan's own handwriting (including all the most popular performers of the day), and the elaborate stage directions, all in Sheridan's hand, which occur at intervals, prove, beyond question, that the drama was on the point of being put upon the stage shortly before that period when Sheridan's connexion with Drury Lane finally ceased—namely, the burning down of the theatre in 1809.

VII.

THE SHERIDAN PAPERS (*continued*).—A MUSICAL AFTERPIECE BY R. B. SHERIDAN, WITH EXTRACTS AND FAC-SIMILE.

THE third and last of these posthumous dramas of Richard Brinsley Sheridan is what was called, at the period of its composition, "A Musical Afterpiece;" and is entirely in the most recent handwriting of its author, as also are all the numerous alterations, emendations, &c., that it has undergone. From this circumstance, and this alone, I judge it to be the most recent production of the three.

The merit of this drama consists in the perfect skill with which a few simple and natural incidents are worked up into a plot of singular interest and completeness; and in the consummate knowledge of stage business and effect, exhibited in numerous little touches, dropped here and there in the early portion of the dialogue, which are not

intended to be noticed, but only to be *felt*, by the audience, so as imperceptibly to prepare the way for what follows. Everything is kept subservient, first to this gradual impression of the plot on the minds of the spectator; and, afterwards, to its gradual development; and the whole is effected with a perfect preservation of the unities of Time, Place, and Action.

The opening and only scene of this capital little drama is thus elaborately described, in the stage directions by its author. I of course copy *verbatim et literatim* from the M.S. I give this description because it forms, and seems *intended* to form, a sort of *overture* to the action that is to follow—every point and particular of it being turned to account in the course of the piece, and much of the action depending entirely on these preconcerted arrangements.

“ACT THE FIRST.

The Scene is in a house situated on the ramparts of a garrison town. The theatre represents a room, with everything necessary for drawing and music. On the K side is a chim-

ney with a fire in it—the furniture of the fireplace—poker, tongs, &c. Two girandoles with lighted candles. It is placed between two doors; the one nearest the orchestra leads to Laura's apartment, the other to a closet. This last is behind a large screen that shades that side of the chimney. The two doors are answered by two others on the opposite side of the stage—one leads to the Governor's apartment—the other is only for the symmetry of the room. Each of the doors has a round window above it to give light within, and opens inward. Towards the end of the stage is a window which looks out into the country, and near it, in the middle of the scene, a glass door. It has an iron grate without. Against the screen a great chair: a table with books; everything proper for writing, some music, a guitar, a pallet and paint brushes. Near is a stand, and a picture on it covered with a green baize. Near the front of the stage, on the P side, a harp. When the curtain draws up Laura is accompanying herself on it, or else drawing, and singing the following couplets. The stage has only the depth of this scene, the proper entrances of which are closed on each side by the chimney, the door leading to the

Governor's room, the window, and the glass door. Both sides of the stage should be lighted with girandole branches, and the actors go in and out only through the different doors."

This drama is in two acts, and it opens with a song by the heroine, which, to those who are familiar with the corresponding compositions by Sheridan in *The Duenna*, *The Stranger*, *Pizarro*, &c., would stamp the piece as from his pen, even if there were no other evidence of the fact. Small as may be the poetical value attached in our own day to compositions so artificial as this, it was rarely that anything so tender in feeling and so graceful in thought and diction was met with, either on the stage or elsewhere, when (as at the probable date of this drama) the Della Cruscan School was rampant.

"SONG.—LAURA.*

" Melancholy, friend to grief,
Ever o'er my bosom reign;
To my sorrows bring relief,
And thyself inspire my strain.

* This is the song given in fac-simile as a frontispiece to the present volume.

“ When thy sadness can impart
All its healing, soft’ning powers,
Then thy tears are to the heart
Like the falling dew to flowers.

“ Happy he whose peaceful day
In retirement gently flows!
From the busy world away,
All thy balmy calm he knows ;

“ Then he hopes alone in thee
Some relief from care to find,
Seeking no society
But his memory and mind.”

There are five or six of these songs, and ten duets and concerted pieces—the chief business and action of the drama being conducted to music. The prose dialogue is the perfection of colloquial simplicity, scarcely a phrase or word being capable of improvement, after a lapse of at least fifty years from its composition.

Perhaps this latter is the most characteristic feature of Sheridan’s style in all his known pieces, and is probably one reason why they have retained their place upon our stage after almost all other contemporary works of a similar kind have dropped away from it. There is probably not one among

all the dramas of the latter half or quarter of the eighteenth century, that could be put upon the stage now, without being first very considerably modernised, except Sheridan's; whereas *The School for Scandal*, *The Rivals*, *The Duenna*, and *The Critic* defy this process, and both read and act as if they had been written yesterday. And precisely the same may be said of the two musical dramas just described. With regard to the burlesque it is different, and the difference is perhaps inherent in the nature of that class of composition—a fact which may account for the absence of any indication on the face of the MS. of any intention of putting it on the stage; while on the other two MSS. there are ample proofs that at one period they were on the point of being produced before the public. As I cannot doubt that this will ultimately be their fate, I abstain from giving any further details of their plots respectively, merely adding that they display a degree of constructive skill that has not been surpassed in any existing dramas of a similar kind with which I am acquainted.

Since the above was written a fact has come to my knowledge, which, had I been acquainted with it sooner, might have spared the reader much of the foregoing details of the discovery of these Sheridan Papers, but which ought not, I think, to occasion the cancelling of those details, because I cannot doubt of their being read with interest for the sake of the singularly curious and interesting MSS. to which they relate.

In making my investigations into the authenticity of these dramas of R. B. Sheridan, and the question of whether or not they had ever been acted, I had, of course, examined (duly and carefully, as I thought) the work possessing the most authority on these points—"Moore's Life of Sheridan." But neither from that source nor from any other had I been able to trace either of the dramas—those of Richard Brinsley or his son—to any more specific personal connection with their authors respectively than that indicated by the handwriting of each, as discovered by myself, and their former possession by Sheridan the father, as stated to me by my deceased friend. When, how-

ever, only about two months before these Memorials were put to press, I had made up my mind that a description of these Sheridan Papers should form part of them, I determined once more (before I related the details of their discovery) to go through "Moore's Life of Sheridan," upon the chance of finding something that distinctly might apply to the question before me. I had at least twice during my former investigations read this work through (carefully, as I thought), and had at least half a dozen times turned over and glanced at all that portion of its pages which (as I supposed) related to the *literary* life of Sheridan. It so happened, however, that on all these occasions *but the last* I had, on account of its heading ("Sheridan's Boyhood, &c."), knowingly passed over with a mere glance the first chapter of Moore's work. My researches on this matter being in every instance made as a matter of business, and under the pressure of other business of even more temporary importance, I did not care to learn anything about a time which, as I took for granted, did not connect itself with the object of my inquiry. But on the last occasion to which

I have alluded,* I (without any special reason for so doing) began my search with the neglected chapter. The reader may judge of my mingled surprise and satisfaction at finding that Mr. Moore not merely alludes in this chapter to a "fragment" of a "farce or play" (so he calls it), entitled "*Jupiter*," written by Sheridan in conjunction with a schoolfellow,† on leaving Harrow, at the age of eighteen, but gives two or three brief extracts from the rhymed portion of it, which extracts the reader will find embodied, *verbatim et literatim*, in the specimens I have given of the burlesque burletta entitled *IXION*, and described in the foregoing pages.

Moore's account of and extract from this "farce" of *Jupiter* show it to have been a sort of crude and indigested anticipation of "The Critic; or, a Tragedy Rehearsed," and nine-tenths of it seem to have been in prose. The rhymed portions of it, as given by Moore, are mere scraps, brought in "by the head and shoulders," as the phrase is, like

* Only a few weeks from the date at which I am writing, May, 1854.

† Halhed, afterwards the celebrated Orientalist.

those of the "Tragedy" in the *Critic*, and are confined to the lines beginning "'Fore George, at loggerheads," &c., and ending with "Ixion flogs the world to tatters!" as given in the foregoing specimens; and the first three lines of Jupiter's song in the subsequent scene, as given at p. 293, &c., beginning—

"Ye dogs, I'm Jupiter imperial," &c.

It would be superfluous to say more here than that the facts I have now stated fix the *avowed* authorship of this piece on Sheridan. But the incomparable dramatic tact that produced *The Rivals* at the age of one or two and twenty, could not fail speedily to convince Sheridan that the subject his boyish taste had chosen for his ante-type of the *Critic*, was in no way adapted to *that* object, but admirably suited to that to which he afterwards applied it, in the expanded and homogeneous form of a burlesque burletta, of the *Midas* class, under the title of *Ixion*; a production which, there can be little doubt, will hereafter be regarded as possessing more freshness and originality of

conception (in its details, I mean); more subtlety of wit, and more breadth of humour, than any of Sheridan's subsequent productions.

It is important to remark, that Moore was evidently quite ignorant of the existence of *Ixion*, and he describes the *burlesque* portion of the piece he calls *Jupiter* as beginning at "'Fore George, at loggerheads," &c., which is somewhere about the middle of *Ixion*. "Here," says the extract in Moore, "the curtain rises."

It appears that, in the sketch referred to by Moore, the mere mortals had ludicrous prefixes to their names,—such as Sir Richard Ixion, Major Amphitryon, &c.

VIII.

THE SHERIDAN PAPERS (*concluded*).—TWO FARCES
BY THOMAS SHERIDAN, WITH EXTRACTS AND FAC-
SIMILE.

I HAVE now to speak of those two dramas by the younger Sheridan, which form part of the “Old Plays” placed in my hands, as before described; and first, as to the discovery of their authorship.

As with those of Richard Brinsley, I had, on their first coming into my possession, satisfied myself that they were well worth careful attention and examination, on their merits alone; but, when the time came for reconsidering the whole of the MS., the extraordinary and unlooked-for discovery of the authorship of those already described so fixed and confined my attention to *them* exclusively, and to the various investigations necessary, in order to render their authenticity as clear to the world as it already was to myself, that the two dramas now to be spoken of were laid aside; and the ultimate

discovery of their authorship was as purely accidental as that of their companions had been.

The investigations just referred to led me to the discovery of a fact little known to this day in the history of the Sheridan family—namely, that during a considerable portion of Sheridan's proprietorship of Drury Lane Theatre, his son "Tom" had filled the responsible office of reader and literary manager of the establishment; and it so happened, that among the papers placed in my hands was a fragment of an early drama of the late Theodore Hook's, entitled "Tekeli; or, the Siege of Mongatz." In this fragment I had found many notes and alterations, in a different hand from the rest of the MS., and all of them signed T. S. As these initials, coupled with the knowledge I had by this time gained of Tom Sheridan's position at Drury Lane Theatre, caused me to take some interest in these notes and suggestions, I had become familiar with the hand in which they were written; so that on the very first occasion of my finding leisure to resume my examination of the two dramas

now to be described, I at once recognised it as identical with that of the notes, &c., signed T. S., in the MS. of "Tekeli."

Knowing, as I did, that Tom Sheridan was not supposed, even by his own family, to have left behind him any literary or dramatic composition, this new discovery excited in me almost as much interest and curiosity as the other had done; and I immediately set myself to verify the handwriting, by comparison with other examples of it in his letters, &c. And this I was enabled to do in the very first quarter to which I addressed myself—namely, my esteemed friend the late R. B. Peake, a son of Sheridan's treasurer of Drury Lane Theatre, and god-son of Sheridan himself.

I will only add, with reference to this part of the subject, that what appears to be the earlier of these two dramas has evidently been carefully read and examined by Sheridan himself, and bears many notes and suggestions in his handwriting. The other,—which is much the superior of the two, does not bear any evidence of Sheridan having read it—doubtless on account of its being evidently the first rough copy of the work—

and, therefore, not in a fit state to be seen by the arbiter of its fate. In fact, of many passages, there are two or three different versions, on neither of which the author has himself decided; and the whole of the last act is without any *names* prefixed to the various speeches.

I will now describe these two curious little dramas, and give specimens of their quality.

The one last referred to above is a broad farce, of the most lively and stirring character. It is called "The Strolling Company," and its scenes and incidents arise out of a runaway marriage between a young gentleman, who has joined a company of strollers, and the daughter of a country gentleman and magistrate in whose neighbourhood they find themselves, and whose forgiveness and goodwill the young couple hope to recover by proving to him that clever acting did not become extinct on the failure of the old Garrick school. To this end Carlton, the leading member of the company, contrives to come before his father-in-law in half-a-dozen different characters, and to get every member of his little *troupe* brought before the old

gentleman, in his capacity as magistrate, in characters not their own, or, indeed, anybody else's.

I am not acquainted with any farce keeping possession of the stage that is so well and cleverly adapted to its double object, of displaying the skill of the various actors engaged in it, and of amusing the audience. It is evidently written expressly to the *measure* of the comic company of Drury Lane at the beginning of the present century, to each of whom is assigned (by name) one of the characters. The cast includes J. Bannister, Suett, Collins, Dowton, Wewitzer, J. Johnson, Cherry, and Kelly; and the female characters are assigned to Mrs. Bland, Miss Tyrer (Mrs. Liston), and Mrs. Mountain.

The water-mark of the paper bears the date of 1802.

To subject any portions of a work of this kind to the critical scrutiny, not merely of an audience, but of readers, fifty years after the date of its composition, may seem to be too severe a test of the skill of its author, and he an untried one. But I do not scruple to do this, in the belief that, with extremely few exceptions (not half-a-dozen perhaps),

there is no other English farce that will better, if so well, bear the test.

The following are portions of the two first scenes of "The Strolling Company:"—

"ACT I.—SCENE I.

*The high road. Town seen at a small distance.
Seat by the road-side. Time, early morning.*

Enter SPEILENBAD, with his fiddle, O.P.

SPEIL.—Bless my soul—bless my soul; I was so warm as de toast. I have walk so fast; de sun is in my face; de wind is in my back; de pain is in my side; de breath is out of my body; and de dirt what I have swallow enough to make my grave. But I was not care. I am before dat cart, what come after with all the gompany. Dey wash not let me ride because I am de fiddler; dey are so proud! Jacko, my boy! (*calls.*) But I will play no more for them. I shall begin on my own bottom (*sits down*). Jacko! (*calls.*) Where is dat small rascal? I will practise my concerto, what I make so hard for myself. I shall play de—(*loud crash heard*). Tunder and lightning! what is that noise what I hear?

JACK (*calls behind the scenes, then enters, O. P.*)—Oh Lord! master! master!

SPEIL.—What ish de matter?

JACK.—The matter? Why, as I hope to be saved, the caravan's upset, with all the company!

SPEIL.—Blesh my soul! Is dere any one what wash hurt?

JACK.—No.

SPEIL.—It ish very goot, then. Pride wash have de fall. I was not thought worthy to tumble out of the cart.

JACK.—No; Mr. Tag told you they were a "select company," and you couldn't be accommodated.

SPEIL.—I have nothing to do with the Tag, or the Rag, or the Bobtail, what is in the cart. I have nothing to do with the *silly-gompany what is in the ditch. I have done with them. Give me my rosin. I shall practise my concerto what I make so hard for myself, before I go into the town.

JACK.—Your rosin is packed up with your other shirt in the caravan.

SPEIL.—For why is my property left in de

* The way in which a German would pronounce "select" (orig.)

cart? I will not be oblige to them for no thing. I will carry all my properties on my own backs, rather dan dey shall help me.

JACK (*half aside*).—Why, so you do pretty near, I believe.

SPEIL.—What ish dat you say? Don't-a make your laugh at me, sirrah. For why have I make you my pupil—my scholar—out of de son of a taylure, heh?

JACK.—Why, to stitch and darn, and clean your shoes; for that's all the instructions you ever give me.

SPEIL.—Heh! what you say? For what have I taken you wid myself into de orchestra, heh?

JACK.—Why, to dust the books and snuff the candles; for that's all I do there.

SPEIL.—Hold your tongue. Snuff de candles very good for you; you must learn de music by degrees. Oh! here comes Mr. Carlton, de manager, and his wife. I shall speak my mind into his face.

Enter CARLTON and WIFE, O. P.

CARL.—Why, how now, Speilenbad? Why do neither you nor your lad assist us in this accident?

SPEIL.—For what shall I assist de cart, when de last wash not assist me? I shall ask you one question. Am I not de master of my instrument?

CARL.—I believe no one will dispute your title to it.

SPEIL.—Very well, den, for what shall I not ride in de cart? Have I not compose de concerto what is so hard for myself?

CARL.—In a style quite of your own, I think.

SPEIL.—Very well, den, for what shall I not ride in de cart? Was I not play de song, de aggompaniment, de òverture, de hornpipe,—was I not play every one what was out of all de tune?

CARL.—Invariably, I believe.

SPEIL.—Very well, den, for what shall I not ride in de cart?

CARL.—I can assure you, I thought it was your own choice.

SPEIL.—I was choose no such a thing. Mr. Tag was tell me you are a silly-gompany. Now the silly-gompany is in de ditch, de silly-gompany may get out. I have noting to do wid dem.

CARL.—Well, well, depend upon it, in future, you shall always have a place reserved.

SPEIL.—And so shall my scholar. Dere is no one in de orchestra but what deserve to ride in de cart.

MRS. CARL. — Come, come, Speilenbad; this must have been some trick of that coxcomb Tag's. He calls himself a "gentleman," you know, and therefore thinks he is privileged to be impertinent. In the meantime, there is your little favourite, Bella, with no one to assist or protect her.

SPEIL.—Well, I shall go for her. I love dat Bella very much. She is so very pretty—she never sing out of tune—she always listen to my concerto what I play. Come along, Jacko, I shall go to take care for her.

[*Exit* O.P.]

CARL.—Well, Kate, what think you of this attempt upon your uncle's heart? Shall we be successful?

MRS. CARL.—If he will but permit us to perform, I own I shall feel sanguine. He always loved me, and I think could I take him by surprise he would receive me; but he is the acting magistrate in this town, you

know, and should he set his face against us, I see no chance of our scheme being put in practice.

CARL.—Why should you think it probable he would refuse us ?

MRS. CARL.—First, because I know he thinks there can be nothing tolerable since the days of Garrick ; secondly, my having eloped with a strolling player, as he supposes, though he does not know you personally, will not render him the more favourable to your profession ; and, lastly, that rascal lawyer, Endless, passed us on the road, and I am much mistaken if his intent is not to do us some mischief here.

CARL.—Surely he will not dare to be such a villain, when he knows I am acquainted with his designs on you.

MRS. CARL.—Never trust him. I have exposed and laughed at him ; and depend upon it there is nothing so revengeful as disappointed vanity.

CARL.—I wish he was condemned to copy all his own rascally proceedings in shorthand, if it were only to keep him out of mischief for a year or two. By the bye—

let me see!—the letter he sent to you—his name is to it, is it not?

MRS. CARL.—Yes; and a curious composition it is (*gives letter*).

CARL.—A thought has struck me, and this letter may be of service. This delay was unlucky, or I might have been beforehand with him with your uncle. These attorneys are always so cursed active when they're not employed. Oh, here comes some of our friends. What a figure Tag is!

Enter SPEILENBAD and TAG.

SPEIL.—Dere!—dere is one of the silly-gompany for you! Dere is de gentleman what I was not fit to ride wid. The ladies are coming.

CARL.—Well, Tag, we've had a pretty complete overture, I think.

TAG.—“Oh, what a falling off was there!” Clean into the ditch, sure enough!

SPEIL.—Yes; dere dey was lay, one up upon de other one, like so many pork in a straw-yard. It was a very silly tumble.”

The remainder of this droll and pleasant

scene cannot be given, nearly all its parts being in two or three different versions.

“SCENE II.—*The House of MR. TALBOT, the County Magistrate.*

Enter ENDLESS AND JACOB.

ENDLESS.—Tell your master Lawyer Endless wishes to speak a word with him. [*Exit JACOB.*] I wonder how I shall be received. I don't think I have made my appearance in this house since that damned affair with Grist the miller's wife.* Well! better luck another time! *Nemo omnibus horis sapit*—nobody's safe in all their amours. I remember thinking, when I was obliged to make my dear Mrs. Endless an honest woman, that I should grow a little more staid. But I don't know how it is; ever since I've seen this Mrs. Carlton, I've felt as brisk as a clerk at quarter sessions. *Oh, quam dulce est amare!* My Dorothea could no more compare with her, than an action at

* This, I have no doubt, is an allusion to a temporary secession of Suett from the Drury Lane House; and, if so, the piece was probably written expressly to reintroduce him in a second chapter of his favourite character of Endless in “No Song No Supper.”

common law to a suit in Chancery, or the steward of a sessions to a judge on the bench. But alas! she slights my tender tale—hard-hearted as a turnkey. Yet I won't throw up the cause, I'm determined. If I can but hamper her husband, I may, perhaps, get a verdict in my favour, though I pay my own costs—and that's pretty well for a sham action.

Enter JACOB.

JACOB.—You mun walk this way, if you please.

ENDLESS.—Oh! very well. Has your master dined?

JACOB.—Noa.

ENDLESS.—Glad o' that—p'rhaps ask me—I'm as empty as the Fleet after a bill of insolvency.

[Exit ENDLESS.]

Enter CARLTON.

CARLTON.—Can I speak with your master, pray?

JACOB.—Noa; he can't hear two on ye; he's a talking wi' Lawyer Endless.

CARLTON.—Curse that fellow; he's like a pig in a lane; there's no getting before him. Do you know his business, pray?

JACOB.—Yes, he's a 'torney, and as big a rogue as any i' the county.

CARLTON.—I believe it from the bottom of my soul. Were you servant here when your master's niece ran away?

JACOB.—Yes; sister helped her to 'lope with an actor-man. Howsomever, she said he were very much of a gentleman.

CARLTON.—That "gentleman" was myself.

JACOB.—Were it, indeed! I should niver have found ye out. Well, and how is young madam?

CARLTON.—Why, very well; and you may do her a material piece of service.

JACOB.—May I? Then I'm sure I will, for sister's sake; but how?

CARLTON.—Why, by getting me taken up, and brought before your master.

JACOB.—Ecod, and so I should; though I didn't think you'd a been honest enough to have owned it.

CARLTON.—But could you contrive this, should it be necessary?

JACOB.—Yes, sure. Why, Lord love ye, constable will take anybody up for the vally of a pint o' beer; and I b'lieve ye actor folk

do come under the statty. I'll fetch him directly.

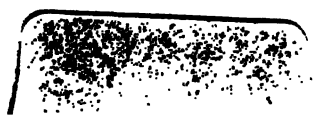
CARLTON.—Stop—stop; not so fast. Let me see this constable presently; in the meantime there's something to drink with him, and be silent.

JACOB.—I will. (*Aside.*) He has a sort o' quality look, sure enough. [*Exit P. S.*"]

The other drama by Thomas Sheridan to which I have alluded is what was at that time called a "*pièce d'occasion*;" the "*occasion*" in this case being the presence in England of a young Indian Prince, known (and probably remembered by many persons still living) as Prince Le Boo. He was, I believe, a son of the chief of a tribe of the Mexican Indians, and had been induced to visit Europe with the view of observing the manners and social habits of "*civilized*" people. This young chief was received with great favour by the upper classes of London; and there can be little doubt that many of the incidents which form the action of this piece were actual occurrences in the European experience of the

amiable "savage." They were, of course, more or less coloured, to suit the objects of the farce, which was probably suggested to his son by Sheridan himself. In any case, he evidently took considerable interest in it, as it bears many marks of his careful revision; and the first fair draught of it seems to have been entirely remodelled, with great advantage to its claims as an acting piece. It has, however (like "The Strolling Company"), never been acted; which is accounted for by the fact of their dates respectively approaching closely to that of the destruction by fire of Drury Lane Theatre in 1809, and that literally compulsory disconnexion from it of R. B. Sheridan, which was felt and resented by him as so violent an outrage upon his feelings and interests,* and which, in all probability, hastened his death.

* See his piteous letter to Whitbread, in "Moore's Life."









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